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University of Kent at Canterbury

**Finding a Church:  
reasons people give for joining and moving  
from churches**

Submitted by Gavin Tracy Wakefield, March 1998

for the

Degree of Doctor of Philosophy

University of Kent at Canterbury

Gavin Tracy Wakefield

Degree of Doctor of Philosophy 1998

Finding a Church: reasons people give for joining and moving from churches

Abstract

This thesis investigates the levels of types of church growth in England in recent years, especially in the Church of England, with a view to assessing the value of church planting as a strategy for increasing church attendance.

In order to do this, it was first established that church plants do have a strong tendency to grow. Because there were no published data on the rates of different types of church growth it was then necessary to produce some base line figures, especially on transfer growth rates.

The level of transfer growth was found to be about 50% of all growth in church attendance, slightly lower when assessed by leaders, slightly higher when assessed by church attenders themselves.

Individual churches were then studied, some by using data supplied by church leaders, others in more detail by questionnaires filled in by people attending those churches.

The key conclusion was that the church plants studied have not grown disproportionately by overall transfer growth, but that they have tended to attract more people from other denominations, which makes the transfer growth more noticeable. Their increases in attendance do therefore mean that church attendance has been higher than it would have been without church planting.

Besides providing statistics on the levels of church growth the Wakefield survey enabled the reasons for joining and leaving churches to be studied. It was found that people moving house tended to look for the nearest church, usually of the same denomination; people dissatisfied with an existing church were more concerned about worship, and were much more likely to change denomination; people attending for the first time also looked for the nearest church where they found it to be friendly.

In qualitative interviews all groups spoke of worship and of the importance of good personal contact, but it was the relative order of importance that varied. These results showed that people finding churches had similar reasons to people finding faith. Comparison with previously ignored research from the 1940's showed that these reasons had persisted for at least the last 50 years in England.

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## Introduction

This thesis was initially begun in order to assess the effectiveness of church planting as a method of encouraging more people from a given area to attend church. Some proponents of church planting have been inclined to regard it as the answer to all the ills of the church, “our future hope” in the words of one writer, whilst those critical of such strategies have argued that new churches have tended to grow mostly by attracting churchgoers from other churches in the locality.

The debate about church planting as currently practised in England is part of the wider responses by churches to changes in English and British society since the Second World War and more particularly since the end of the 1960’s. It occurs in a context where religious belief, practice and influence are said to be on the decline, the so-called secularisation thesis, and it has been frequently argued that loss of faith has led to loss of church attendance, and a diminished role for religion in society. It is certainly that church-going in England has declined during over a much longer period, since the 1880’s according to the detailed longitudinal data gathered by Gill<sup>1</sup>.

However, since the 1960’s the debate about secularisation has not been settled, for the complexities of religious beliefs and behaviours has become more apparent: a recent and thorough review by Hamilton of the debate pointed out:

*“Disagreement on the question of secularisation is not, however, only a matter of terms and concepts. There is much dispute about whether contemporary society is less religious than past societies, whatever one understands by religion.”*<sup>2</sup>

He ended his review by concluding that:

*“we do not yet know if secularisation is a specifically Western or a specifically Christian phenomenon or if it is a phenomenon of industrialisation or of some wider process of modernisation. It is unlikely to be simply the result of industrialisation. Non-Christian and non-Western countries, therefore, may only experience it if their industrialisation is accompanied by westernisation or modernisation along Western lines. If secularisation is specifically a Christian phenomenon they are certainly*

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<sup>1</sup> R. Gill *The Myth of the Empty Church*, chapter 7 onwards

<sup>2</sup> Malcolm B. Hamilton *The Sociology of Religion*, chapter 15, p.167

*unlikely to undergo it since westernisation, if it occurs at all, is unlikely to mean Christianisation. ”*<sup>3</sup>

In view of this uncertainty the purpose of this introduction is not to review the whole of the debate about secularisation, but to highlight some key strands of the debate as it applies to Britain. This means that no comment is made on the growth or decline of Christianity or other religions in other parts of the world, and similarly that non-Christian religions are of only marginal interest during the period concerned, even though they are likely to become more important in British society in the future.

### *Some key strands in the secularisation debate in Britain*

The debate on secularisation is dogged by problems of definition of terms, especially over religion and over secularisation. The range of definitions of secularisation is dealt with more fully in the Conclusions, where some assessments are made. Since this thesis is specifically concerned with examining movement of people between Christian congregations the aspect of religion mainly in view is attendance at formal, corporate acts of worship, usually called church-going. One attempted measure of secularisation is the extent of church-going, although other religious practices and beliefs are also important.

In a statistical study of this kind these aspects of religion and secularisation will be to the fore, though others will be noted, especially when motivations for church attendance are discussed.

Theoretical discussions of religion going back a century in such writers as Edward Tylor, James Frazer, Karl Marx and Sigmund Freud have predicted decline in the influence and importance of religion, particularly as science came to dominate life. In essence, they believed that secularisation would come about because of factors external to Christianity.

Other thinkers such as Peter Berger during the 1960's, following more closely the work of Weber, placed the emphasis on factors internal to Christianity, the opening up of individualism through the Reformation, and even the rationalist approach to religion taken over from Judaism.<sup>4</sup> Berger acknowledged that external social and economic factors were also involved, but argued that these external factors would not have the same effect of

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<sup>3</sup> *ibid.* p.182

<sup>4</sup> See especially P. Berger *The Social Reality of Religion*

secularisation upon other religions. Subsequently Berger's own position has changed, and he became more sceptical about the secularisation theory.<sup>5</sup>

The work of Bryan Wilson from the 1960's onwards, set out in *Religion in Secular Society* and *Contemporary Transformations: Religion and Secular Society*, built on the tradition of emphasizing factors external to Christianity by drawing attention to the growth in rationality and the autonomy of scientific knowledge leading to the loss of credibility of religious interpretations of life. He saw the change in thinking and motivation as the key feature of secularisation in the twentieth century:

*"Religious thinking (his emphasis) is perhaps the area which evidences most conspicuous change. Men act less and less in response to religious motivation: they assess the world in empirical and rational terms.... Even if, as some sociologists have argued, non-logical behaviour continues in unabated measure in human society, then at least the terms of non-rationality have changed. It is no longer the dogmas of the Christian Church which dictate behaviour, but quite other irrational and arbitrary assumptions about life, society and the laws which govern the physical universe."*<sup>6</sup>

Thus for Wilson it was thinking and motivation which led to behavioural change, an assumption which has been challenged in the discussion about 'believing and belonging'. Gill went so far as to call the approach exemplified by Wilson as a myth, and attacked monocausal explanations of decline in church attendance.<sup>7</sup> Even within Wilson's own statement the ambiguities and complexities of the secularisation theory can be glimpsed: is it about the decline of Christianity or religion in general? Is it primarily about behaviour or motivations? And from the perspective of 1990's post-modernism, the greater prominence accorded to spiritualities of many kinds suggests that non-rational thinking does continue to be influential.

Wilson's argument was largely based on Christianity in Europe and the USA, taking in the overall pattern of institutional decline in Europe and resilience and even growth of the church in the USA. The argument depended on examining statistical evidence for church attendance, baptisms, confirmations and so forth. He analysed data from the Church of

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<sup>5</sup> See most recently P. Berger *A Far Glory*

<sup>6</sup> B.R. Wilson *Religion in Secular Society*, p.x

<sup>7</sup> Gill *op. cit.*, especially p.13

England, mainly from 1885 to 1960<sup>8</sup>, which show declining church attendance and declining proportions of the population using the rites of passage offered by the established church.

Within his interpretation, religious revivals are not an exception to the trend of secularisation, but a reaction to it, an ultimately doomed attempt to re-form a perceived earlier and purer form of the religion, “a demand to return to stronger and more emotional religious attitudes.”<sup>9</sup>

Denominationalism was seen as promoting secularisation because it provided choice between churches, and legitimised the choice of no church affiliation. His clinching comment on the British scene, though, is now tragically less relevant than 30 years ago:

*“If further evidence were needed, the marked loss of religious fervour in Northern Ireland in the decades since the end of the Second World War, and their diminished consequence in political terms, illustrates the declining relevance of religion for politics.”*<sup>10</sup>

The apparent inevitability of secularisation has been questioned by other writers, such as Bellah, Luckmann, Stark and Bainbridge, and Wuthnow, and within the British context by David Martin. Martin did not deny the existence of any form of secularisation, but was “*suspicious of it as a sociological or historical generalization about the current and future course of development, and also as a general prejudice against the institutional framework of religious awareness.*”<sup>11</sup>

As his work developed, Martin particularised secularisation as a European and Christian phenomenon, rather than the inevitable direction of human development. By examining the countries of Europe individually he sought to identify the specific factors which led to varying levels of secularisation.

The detail is impressive, but has not dismissed the case for secularisation, if indeed that was his intention: “*I want to suggest under what conditions religious institutions, like churches and sects, become less powerful and how it comes about that religious beliefs*

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<sup>8</sup> *ibid.*, pp.6-11

<sup>9</sup> *ibid.*, p.27

<sup>10</sup> *ibid.*, p.60

*are less easily accepted.*" He also goes on to state that *"a theory of secularisation such as I now propose need not assume that secularisation is a very long term or inevitable trend."*<sup>12</sup>

Through his work on churches in the Western world, he can be said to have shown that secularisation is far from a smooth, inevitable process, but depends on a host of specific historical and social factors. Indeed, Martin's work is cited most favourably in a recent re-stating of the case for the secularisation thesis by Steve Bruce:

*"Though the critics of secularisation sometimes improve our understanding, much of the recent debate has been debased by the construction and demolition of straw men. One of the aims of this book is to clarify the arguments of such scholars as Weber, Durkheim, Parsons, Berger, Wilson and Martin so that we can build on what is of enduring value in their work and not become trapped in a cycle of fashion-led revisions to revisionism."*<sup>13</sup>

Bruce's own view was that, despite "excursions from the main route", the secularisation theory remained robust and the best unifying explanation of religious change in the West. The result, for Bruce, has not been the disappearance of belief in the supernatural.

*"Rather the forms in which it is expressed have become so idiosyncratic and so diffuse that there are few specific social consequences. Instead of religiosity expressing itself in new sects with enthusiastic believers, it is expressed through piecemeal and consumerist involvement in elements of a cultic world."*<sup>14</sup>

For Bruce it is the disintegration of an overarching religious explanation of the world which is the most important result and symptom of secularisation. In this view secularisation is not necessarily about the decline of religious beliefs, so much as their plurality and therefore impotence in making much difference socially.

Thus, as Hamilton's overview indicates and as the brief outline here attempts to show, the notion of secularisation is a complex one, and several aspects have been identified by different theorists. Some of those aspects may even be contradictory, while the pluralism

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<sup>11</sup> D. Martin *A Sociology of English Religion*, p.11

<sup>12</sup> D. Martin *A General Theory of Secularisation*, p.12

<sup>13</sup> Steve Bruce *Religion in the Modern World*, p.6, my emphasis

<sup>14</sup> *ibid.*, p.234

with which Bruce ends is seen by other writers as something different to the secularisation which he sought to defend.<sup>15</sup>

In the words of Grace Davie:

*"The closing decades of the twentieth century [are] decades in which both traditional institutions and traditional certainties struggle, in secular as well as religious life... but [sees] a society in which 'spiritual stirrings' - of a widely diverse, not necessarily conventional and frequently contradictory nature - are widespread."*<sup>16</sup>

Further to this changing description from secularisation to pluralism, whilst the statistics of traditional forms of church attendance and rites of passage in Britain show a clear decline since the mid 19<sup>th</sup> century, that has not closed off the debate about secularisation, even within Britain, let alone globally. There are too many cross-currents to be able to predict with total confidence which way the tide is running.

In the present thesis it will be seen that there is evidence both of decline in church attendance, but also of serious attempts to reverse that trend. It presents the first serious empirical study of types of growth in church attendance, both of transfer growth between churches and of new attenders. It will be shown that there are still significant numbers of people joining churches for the first time as teenagers and adults; to set against the 'secularising certainty' of a writer like Bruce,<sup>17</sup> this study finds that there are many people joining mainline churches with religious reasons for joining and continuing to attend. Similarly, the existence and practice of the church planting movement is seen as a de-secularising trend.

The results of this present research are discussed further in the Conclusion in relation to the six forms of secularisation identified by Shiner.<sup>18</sup>

### ***Charismatic Movements and Leadership***

One response to the perception of secularisation has been the rise of the Charismatic Movement in the mainline denominations.<sup>19</sup> If the acceptance of the inevitability of

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<sup>15</sup> See, for example, Gill, *op. cit.*, p.8

<sup>16</sup> Grace Davie *Religion in Britain since 1945*, p.190

<sup>17</sup> *op. cit.*, p.232

<sup>18</sup> cited in Hamilton *op. cit.*, p.166

secularisation can be loosely associated with the anti-supernaturalist, 'death of God' theology which arose in the 1960's, then the Charismatic Movement can be seen as the opposite response, being profoundly supernaturalist and emphasizing divine intervention.

The rise of Pentecostalism worldwide during the 20<sup>th</sup> century, and the growth of the Charismatic Movement in the mainline denominations since the 1950's, has been dramatic numerically.<sup>20</sup> This provides a strong indication that Berger's thesis on the inevitability of secularisation via internal forces of rationality is far from proven. In commenting on the charismatic movement Martin writes positively of its ability to take account of contemporary social reality and yet to stand against it:

*"By combining traditional and modern elements it is the most viable of all the reactions and the most lively manifestation of the dual tendency to both reflect fragmentation and react sharply against it."*<sup>21</sup>

It is therefore not surprising that most leaders of the church planting movement in England come from Pentecostal or Charismatic backgrounds, and are forming new churches with that theological stance. There are other theological strands in the church planting movement but numerically it has been dominated by the pentecostal/charismatic approach. Within this thesis both non-Anglican denominations studied are of this kind, and all of the Anglican parishes studied have at least been significantly influenced by the Charismatic Movement.

To draw attention to the importance of the Charismatic Movement within church planting clearly raises questions of the nature of leadership and the classic distinction made by Weber<sup>22</sup> between charismatic and institutional forms of leadership. Within church planting much of the early work was pioneered by gifted individuals who theologically were charismatics, but could also be described that way sociologically.

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<sup>19</sup> A useful overview from 1963-1985 is given by A. Hastings *A History of English Christianity*, pp.556-8, 618-20

<sup>20</sup> From 1960 to 1995 Pentecostals rose from 12 million to 106 million, *World Churches Handbook 1997*

<sup>21</sup> D. Martin *General Theory of Secularisation*, p.94

<sup>22</sup> M. Weber "The Sociology of Charismatic Authority" in *From Max Weber*, p.245-52



The way in which Anglican church planting leaders have evinced this trait is highlighted by accusations of a willingness to break boundaries both liturgically and in the parish structure. The comment of Weber seems especially apposite:

*"The charismatic structure ... knows no agency of control or appeal, no local bailiwicks or exclusive functional jurisdictions; nor does it embrace permanent institutions like our bureaucratic departments"'*<sup>23</sup>.

Within the Church of England there is a longstanding, historical commitment to the parish as a geographical entity for the 'cure of souls'. The minister, called the incumbent, is given considerable autonomy within the parish, but is supposed to minister in other parishes only with the permission of the incumbent of that parish. Usually this system works well, but when the church in one parish is growing rapidly it may wish to expand into a neighbouring parish. One charismatic leader wrote very forcefully about the restrictions imposed by the parish system, ending his remarks by colourfully describing it "as the condom of the Church of England!"<sup>24</sup>

Two of the parishes studied in detail in this thesis have had strong charismatic leadership, being part of the first wave of church planting parishes in the 1980's. However, by no means have all church plants been led in this way, even though the role of leadership is crucial. The official Church of England report *Breaking New Ground* published in 1994 was a sign that the institution was accepting the validity of the movement, and subsequent publicity on the rate of church planting a sign of welcoming what was happening.

It is not the purpose of this thesis to further investigate the role of leadership in the success or otherwise of church planting as a strategy for evangelism, but it is important to at least note the key part played by leaders of new churches. To motivate people to be involved and to join is to get them to stand against the powerful forces of secularisation discussed above, and therefore one would expect charismatic leaders to be to the fore.

### ***Outline of this thesis***

The present thesis is part of the assessing and evaluating of this particular charismatic response to secularising trends in society. It throws light more widely on motivations of

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<sup>23</sup> *ibid.*, p.246

<sup>24</sup> *Pythches New Wineskins*, p.20

individuals in joining and moving churches<sup>25</sup>, and it seeks to test the criticism of church plants as merely recycling churchgoers.<sup>26</sup>

In order to test this criticism two pieces of information were required:

1. how much movement between church congregations might be considered normal?
2. how much movement there was into church plants from other congregations?

Extensive searches of the literature on church growth revealed considerable theoretical discussion of such issues, but little empirical work.

**Part I** of the present piece of research began by seeking to establish baseline figures for movement between congregations (transfer growth in the terminology of the church growth movement) by comparing results from the few surveys already undertaken in this area. The figures were then compared with certain congregations which had recently been involved in church planting. The statistics from both previous and new surveys in this part of the thesis all came from ordained ministers or other leaders of congregations.

As a result of the difficulties in defining transfer growth, in **Part II** the research moved onto a new type of survey: in this survey individual members of a few congregations were asked questions designed to determine levels and types of movement between congregations. When compared with ministerial comments, this revealed considerable differences of perception between ministers and members of the congregation about the interpretation of individual faith journeys.<sup>27</sup>

In particular, more individuals tended to see their spiritual progress as a longer process than the ministers. The ministers involved in this part of the research project tended to be evangelical in theology and more inclined than the church attenders to talk of conversion, rather than growth. The difference was not absolute, but showed a definite trend.

In view of this, **Part III** investigated the individual descriptions of faith journeys by means of qualitative interviews. This work was considerably helped by the discovery of a similar piece of work published in 1949 in the *British Weekly* but apparently not referred

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<sup>25</sup> Chapters 6 and 13 report the main original research data in this thesis.

<sup>26</sup> Further discussed in section 1.3 and in the Conclusions

to subsequently. The interviews clearly showed the complexity of the processes involved in both commitment of faith and commitment to attending a particular church.

The consequence of following this route has been that conclusions about the efficacy of church planting have to be rather more tentative than had been hoped, though some conclusions are reached.

Along the way, light has been shed on the way that people join and move churches. There are striking similarities between the processes of joining a church, belonging, and coming to a considered Christian faith, believing. A significant similarity is the importance of personal contact.

One further contribution of this research is to begin to disentangle the two processes of belonging and believing, conflated in many previous surveys, whilst showing that they are have features in common. If the early writers such as Frazer and Tylor, followed by Wilson, emphasized that loss of belief led to loss of belonging, and more recently Gill has argued that belonging leads to believing, this thesis finds that loss of belief does not in itself significantly lead to loss of belonging but nor does belonging necessarily precede believing.

The process revealed here is one in which believing and belonging tend to grow together, often through the same mechanisms. Some religious belief is probably required before belonging is initiated, but that belief itself is also developed and shaped by the fact of belonging.

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<sup>27</sup> A review of a recent book relying on ministerial assessment said it was “to risk analysing little more than clouds and cuckoos.”<sup>1</sup> Peter Baron in the *Church Times*

### Acknowledgements of help

This piece of work could not have happened without the help and support of many people. I am very pleased to record my thanks here.

To my wife, Fran, and my children, Rachel, Miriam and Sarah for putting up with statistics and the use of the computer!

For the time and support of parish colleagues, past and present, especially in enabling me to have 3 months study leave which made it possible to complete the study: Margaret Ashton, Peter Ashton, David Eaton, Julie Eaton, Noel Hawkins, and many members of Christ Church, Billericay.

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## Part I:

### Baseline studies of levels of movement and growth, as defined by ministers

## Chapter One

### Preliminary Issues

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## 1.1 The Church Growth Movement and its terminology

### 1.1.1 Church growth and the Church Growth Movement

There are many books on church growth, especially from the USA, now available. They seek to provide church leaders with principles which will lead to an increased number of churchgoers. Most of the impetus for this work has come from the Church Growth Movement, founded by Donald McGavran, an American who had served as a missionary in India.

The Church Growth Movement (CGM) has received both acclaim and substantial theological criticism.<sup>1</sup> It has particularly been criticised for its assumption that numerical growth is at the heart of evangelism and has been castigated for a reductionist approach to evangelism and the content of the gospel of Jesus Christ.

The purpose of this thesis is not to defend or critique the movement, though there is some critique along the way. This thesis makes use of Church Growth terminology in order to relate to the existing body of research and because the CGM itself is keen to work with accurate data.

Such an insistence on the gathering and use of accurate data is surely not misplaced: the importance of this was noted in the influential Church of England report *Faith in the City*. Their examination of population figures used by dioceses found that:

*"Existing diocesan estimates for population, where available at all, were inflated by margins ranging typically between 15% and 50%, and often much more - even double or treble.*

*This suggests grave questions about the statistical data base in many dioceses. It is difficult to follow fair and rational policies in the distribution of resources, along Sheffield or any other lines, if the basic facts of the local situation are not known."*<sup>2</sup>

This leads them to make their second recommendation on the collection and presentation of accurate statistics by dioceses.<sup>3</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> A recent overview of theological criticism is in *Interpretation* XLVIII, No. 2, pp.145-155

<sup>2</sup> *Faith in the City*, p.85f, para. 5.15 and 16

<sup>3</sup> *ibid.*, p.361

Progress has been made on population figures within the Church of England, and MARC Europe have been working on church attendance figures for all denominations in England and other countries.

However, in the context of long term decline in church-going and attempts to reverse this trend in the Decade of Evangelism and the advocacy of large scale church planting (especially the DAWN 2000 project), there remains a great deal of refining of statistics to be done.

It is with this in mind that the methods and insights of the Church Growth Movement can be useful. The definition adopted by the British Church Growth Association makes this clear:

*"Church Growth investigates the nature, function, structure, health and multiplication of Christian churches as they relate to the effective implementation of Christ's commission to 'Go, then, to all peoples everywhere and make them my disciples'.*

*Church Growth seeks to combine the revealed truths of the Bible with related insights from contemporary social and behavioural sciences."*<sup>4</sup>

To assist the process of investigation various kinds of church growth are distinguished, including in maturity, community and service as well as in number.<sup>5</sup> In this thesis it is numerical growth of church attendance and membership that is discussed. It is necessary to mention both attendance and membership since usually only one or other is available in a given situation.

### 1.1.2 Types of numerical church growth

Church growth writers usually describe four kinds of numerical growth: biological growth, transfer growth, restoration growth, and conversion growth.<sup>6</sup> Similar terms are used to describe the ways in which churches lose members. In this thesis these terms are used for convenience.

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<sup>4</sup> R. Pointer *How do Churches Grow?*, p.17

<sup>5</sup> *ibid.*, pp.27-30

<sup>6</sup> *ibid.*, p.27

There are two observations about the use of such terms:

Observation 1:

Church growth studies put considerable emphasis on the right use of social sciences and the collection of empirical data. Yet it is striking that very few empirical studies have been published which distinguish the various types of growth and loss. This seems a significant gap in the literature, when a discipline does not adequately work from its theoretical base. As one writer attempting an empirical study put it: *"In spite of these three [types of growth] being recognised by the Church Growth Movement, the concept of transfer growth has been almost completely ignored."*<sup>7</sup>

The difficulty arises partly because of the practical problems in gaining the data from local churches, but it also stems from a lack of recognition of a second observation.

Observation 2.

Although apparently clear definitions of the types of growth are given, they fail to recognise the different ways that different churches structure their internal lives and they fail to recognise the complexity of the spiritual journey for many people. It is not uncommon for an individual to change her or his own perception of the journey as time goes on: what seemed like a conversion may later look like a significant re-commitment; an apparently trivial gesture may later acquire new depths of meaning.

Recently this complexity has become more fully noted. In particular, this has been done in the work by Finney<sup>8</sup> on people within one year of a public profession of faith in England, by Gibbs<sup>9</sup> on nominality in four Western countries and by Beasley-Murray<sup>10</sup> on biological and conversion growth.

Finney: *Finding Faith Today*

John Finney's research was based on an inter-denominational survey in England of people 'aged 16 and over, who had "made a public profession of faith in the last twelve months" (i.e. between about March 1990 and March 1991).'<sup>11</sup> A total of 511 people

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<sup>7</sup> Beasley-Murray *Turning the Tide*, p.55

<sup>8</sup> J. Finney *Finding Faith Today*

<sup>9</sup> E. Gibbs *Winning Them Back*

<sup>10</sup> P. Beasley-Murray "A Godly Upbringing?" in *Church Growth Digest* 13.2, pp.6-8

<sup>11</sup> *op. cit.*, p.ix

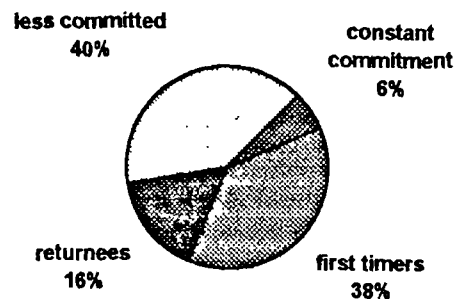


were involved in the survey, and it deliberately excluded those who saw the foundation of their Christian life in childhood.<sup>12</sup>

Although this sample of people might be thought to be converts by outside observers, 46% regarded themselves as always being a Christian. Even in the case of those being baptized in one of the New Churches 22% had seen themselves as Christians beforehand. Of the 54% overall who were conscious of a time when they were not a Christian 29% of them saw their new commitment as a return to the church in some way.

The pie chart below, figure 1.1, is calculated from the information in the survey report.<sup>13</sup> Those who thought their commitment had been constant and those who had been less committed described themselves as always Christian; the other two categories were of those who were conscious of a time when they were not Christians. Only 38% could be regarded as without any previous Christian commitment and even then nearly 40%<sup>14</sup> had a nominal allegiance to Christianity.

**Figure 1.1 How the participants described themselves**



The terms which individuals used to describe themselves were even more varied than this summary can show. It indicates the problem of classifying individuals, a theme which has recurred frequently in discussion with church leaders about church growth issues. The surveys discussed in chapters 2 and 3 all depend on classification by church leaders (in some cases these are lay leaders): Finney's work suggests that self-classification by the

<sup>12</sup> *ibid.*, p.x

<sup>13</sup> *op. cit.*, p.22f

<sup>14</sup> the report has a group which is 40% of "first timers" described as 'mainly "nominal Christians"', *ibid.*, Fig. 12, p.23

individuals concerned will be more varied than is recognised in the usual church growth terms.

The surveys conducted specifically for this thesis did ask individuals to classify themselves which led on occasion to multiple answers, usually in the form of being raised as a Christian and also having a time when they became a Christian.

Gibbs: *Winning Them Back*

In the Introduction to his book on nominality Gibbs describes the complexity of defining nominality and of the variety of conditions it covers.<sup>15</sup> It is "not a static state, but rather a fluctuating and selective condition." His basic definition is of "all those who, for whatever reason, want to be known as Christians". The discussion is later nuanced to provide six categories of commitment, from active regular attender to nominal and to notional Christians.<sup>16</sup>

This recognition makes definitions of conversion and renewal of faith far more involved than is usually recognised. The surveys discussed in this thesis do not adequately reflect this situation and therefore distinctions between conversion and renewal of faith can not be pressed.

Even transfer growth is not immune from some confusion: how long a gap between leaving one church and joining another should be allowed for the term 'transfer' to be used? My own surveys asking people to assess themselves used the expression 'did you attend another church immediately before this on?', which was left for them to interpret as they wanted.

Beasley-Murray: *A Godly Upbringing?*

One survey of Baptist churches in London sought to assess biological and conversion growth amongst young people under the age of 21.<sup>17</sup> Beasley-Murray drew attention to the difficulty in defining biological growth:

*"biological growth is clearly involved where young people are baptised both of whose parents are members of the church, but what about where only one*

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<sup>15</sup> *op. cit.*, p.8f

<sup>16</sup> *ibid.*, p.25f

<sup>17</sup> *op. cit.*, p.6ff

*parent is a member and where perhaps the other parent is most certainly not a Christian?...Or what about those cases where one or both parents are active in another church?"<sup>18</sup>*

The survey form therefore distinguished between seven categories of parental involvement. They were:

1. both parents members
2. one parent a member
3. neither parents members but one/both regular attenders
4. parents active in another church
5. one parent active in another church
6. no previous meaningful connection with any church
7. meaningful previous connection with another church

Beasley-Murray decided to regard 1-5 as forms of biological growth and 6 or 6 and 7 as conversion growth. Category 7 is probably better regarded as transfer growth but this possibility is not discussed. This paper thus indicates again the difficulty in making classifications. (Its numerical findings are discussed in the conclusions to chapter 2, section 2.6, with the results in Table 2.36.)

It is therefore with some diffidence that the church growth terms have been used in this study but the results obtained suggest it is possible to draw some conclusions on that basis. The particular emphasis of this thesis is to provide at least a first approximation for likely levels of the different types of growth and loss, especially transfer growth.

## 1.2 Transfer growth and church planting

### 1.2.1 Church plants do grow

The initial impetus for this work came from comments about transfer growth in church planting. Attention has recently been drawn to the phenomenon of the transfer between competing congregations in the second half of the 19th century.<sup>19</sup> A similar criticism of

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<sup>18</sup> *ibid.*, p. 7f

<sup>19</sup> Robin Gill *The Myth of the Empty Church*, chap. 6

contemporary church planting is that it tends to attract people from one Christian congregation to another without having any significant impact on church-going rates.<sup>20</sup>

However, such comments are usually anecdotal, as are the responses from the enthusiasts. Careful study of rates of church attendance in a given area and of the types of growth and loss is required to fully investigate the effect. This thesis mainly contributes by proposing some expected rates of types of growth.

There seems little doubt that church-planting produces growth in the total number attending the new church and its 'parent' church. The next two sections present some of the evidence for this assertion from a variety of sources in the USA and England. The evidence is not entirely unqualified but the overall assertion of growth does seem valid.

### 1.2.2 Evidence from the USA of growth through church planting

Studies in the USA have demonstrated a direct correlation between growth or decline in denominational membership and the number of new congregations:

*"Every denomination reporting an increase in membership reports an increase in the number of congregations. Every denomination reporting an increase in the total number of congregations reports an increase in members. Every denomination reporting a decrease in membership reports a decrease in the number of congregations. Every denomination reporting a decrease in the total number of congregations reports a decrease in members. While this does not prove a cause and effect relationship, it does introduce the first component of a denominational strategy for church growth."*<sup>21</sup>

This first component is to "organize new congregations".<sup>22</sup>

It is also suggested that it is possible to have a goal of 60-80% of members in a new congregation who were not active in another church immediately before joining the new congregation.<sup>23</sup> Such members would not all be converts to the Christian faith but

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<sup>20</sup> Similar criticisms have been made about growing churches generally: what is not demonstrated is the extent of transfer growth and conversion growth in these contexts either. Gibbs, *op. cit.*, p.12 comments on the need for numerical analysis but is unable to provide it.

<sup>21</sup> Lyle E. Schaller "What are the Alternatives?" in Hoge and Roozen *Understanding Church Growth and Decline*, p.351

<sup>22</sup> *ibid.*, p.352

<sup>23</sup> *ibid.*, p.352

include church members who had moved house and not joined another church. The extent to which this is a realistic goal is not clear, since no supporting evidence is given, and it may not be the same in an English context.

More recently it has been asserted that *"In the USA today, in most years, the denominations that are growing are starting more churches than they are closing."*<sup>24</sup>

A specific example of this American trend is provided by the Southern Baptist Convention (SBC). Most of their membership growth comes from baptism, both of children of existing members and of adults, who may be converts to Christianity or transferring from other churches whose baptism is not recognised as valid.<sup>25</sup> Information on baptism rates in 1976 was analysed by the age of the church: table 1.1 clearly shows the much greater effectiveness of the younger churches in baptizing people:

Table 1.1 Baptism rates by age of church, Southern Baptist Convention, 1976<sup>26</sup>

Age of church in years	Baptism rate per 100 Resident Members	Number of churches
Less than 11	9.5	2,314
11-20	6.3	3,732
21-30	5.7	4,577
31-40	4.6	2,272
41+	3.7	19,651

It is true that the smaller churches had a higher rate of baptisms and that the newer churches tended to be smaller. However, there was sufficient data to allow for the effects of both size and age of church. This showed very clearly the relationship between age of church and baptism rate. For example, for all churches with less than 2,000 resident members every size band showed a declining baptism rate as the age of the church increased. (There were no younger churches larger than this. The older churches larger

<sup>24</sup> G. Hunter *To Spread the Power*, p.111, quoted in D. A. McGavran *Effective Evangelism*, p.121

<sup>25</sup> Phillip Jones "An Examination of the Statistical Growth of the Southern Baptist Convention" in Hoge and Roozen *op. cit.*, p.164

<sup>26</sup> *ibid.*, p.171. Data from the SBC Uniform Church Letter

than this did not show a systematic variation but the number of churches in each category is not stated; it is likely to be small leading to the variations noted.)

The same phenomenon has been shown in more recent research on membership growth in the SBC during the period 1981-86.<sup>27</sup> The key finding was that newer churches were more likely to grow than older ones and that this remained true even when allowing for church size and the social environment. This allowance was necessary because it could be that newer churches grew because they were smaller or because they were disproportionately in areas favourable to SBC growth.

Of all SBC churches founded before 1927, 25% grew more than 10% between 1981 and 1986, while 68% of those founded between 1972 and 1981 grew more than 10%. In both groups there was growth, but in the oldest churches the mean was 4.1%, in the newest churches it was 47.1%. The intermediate aged churches varied between these two extremes, with the largest drop in growth occurring between the newest and the next newest groups of churches. "This suggests that young churches have a great potential for rapid growth, but that this 'window of opportunity' only lasts for 10 or 15 years."<sup>28</sup>

After this stage churches in the SBC were increasingly likely to be plateaued (or static in some terminologies). Overall, the 7% of newest churches accounted for 25% of the total SBC growth.<sup>29</sup> No analysis has been published in this research of the types of growth involved.

This evidence is not directly applicable to many English denominations which have seen membership losses and more church closures, but the comparison is made with the United Methodist Church which saw a net loss of 2,255 churches between 1964 and 1969, and of 1,626 between 1969 and 1974. Indeed, in 1971 across the USA this denomination started only 16 new churches. Based on the evidence of this research, one third of their membership losses between 1969 and 1974, and one quarter between 1974 and 1984, could be accounted for by this net loss of churches.<sup>30</sup>

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<sup>27</sup> C. K. Hadaway "Impact of New Church Development on Southern Baptist Growth" in *Rev. Rel. Research* 31.4 pp.370-9

<sup>28</sup> *ibid.*, p.372

<sup>29</sup> *ibid.*, p.376

<sup>30</sup> *ibid.*, p.377

Thus net loss or net gain of churches is an important factor in the decline or growth of a denomination, but it is not the only one.

These findings are made in a setting where churches operate in a free market economy. In England it has been argued that the existence of a subsidized established church has led to very different patterns of church planting, growth and decline.<sup>31</sup> In particular, Anglican churches are closed with extreme reluctance, long after new churches have been planted. The decreasing subsidy to Anglican churches in England will increase the relevance of the American experience.

### 1.2.3 Evidence from England of growth through church planting

#### Separate towns:

The most recent English Church Census has shown an increase in adult attenders in separate towns, against the national trend of decline. Between 1985 and 1989 all other categories of social environment showed a decline in the number of adult attendances. The overall decline was about 1.3% (3,755,000 to 3,706,900). In separate towns there was an increase of about 1.6% (580,100 to 589,300<sup>32</sup>). The report based on the census attributes that increase to church planting: *"the Independent churches (especially the House Church Movement) have frequently targeted [separate towns] for starting new churches. The growth here reflects the success of that activity."*<sup>33</sup>

However, this conclusion by Brierley reveals as much about the presuppositions of the commentary as it does about adult attendance in separate towns or church planting. A careful examination of the attendance by denomination (or groups of churches) shows that independent churches have grown in these areas by 6% or 3,200 people in the period 1985-9<sup>34</sup>. This is only a third of the overall increase of 9,200. Table 1.2 lists the changes in attendance in separate towns by denomination.

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<sup>31</sup> Robin Gill *The Myth of the Empty Church*, especially from chapter 6 onwards. By the second half of the nineteenth century, the Church of England is described as suffering from "subsidized inefficiency", p.124

<sup>32</sup> Peter Brierley *Prospects for the Nineties*, p.17

<sup>33</sup> Peter Brierley *'Christian' England*, p.111

<sup>34</sup> Brierley *Prospects*, p.29

Table 1.2 Changes in attendance in separate towns by denomination, 1985-9<sup>35</sup>

Denomination	% change	Numerical change
Methodist	-9	-6,700
Baptist	+4	1,700
United Reform Church	-0.4	-100
Independents	+6	3,200
Afro-Caribbean	-15	-600
Pentecostals	+13	2,400
other Free Churches	+12	2,500
Anglicans	-10	-14,700
Roman Catholic	+12	21,100
Orthodox	+40	400

The figures in this table show very clearly that the main reason for increased attendances in separate towns is the growth in Roman Catholic attendances. By comparison, Anglican churches declined by 10% or 14,700 people in separate towns. Numerically, the Independents that Brierley draws attention to, are the second largest group which showed an increase. However, in percentage terms they are only the fifth fastest growing group in these towns. Again, the increase in Roman Catholic attendances is noteworthy for being such a large percentage from a relatively large base.

It is likely that church planting is an important part of the reason for the increase in attendance for many or all these denominations but figures on the changes in the number of congregations have not been published. However, on the evidence of the above table, using the data summarised by Marc Europe, it is difficult to attribute the observed increase so specifically to church planting by independent churches, "especially the House Church Movement".

#### Church of England:

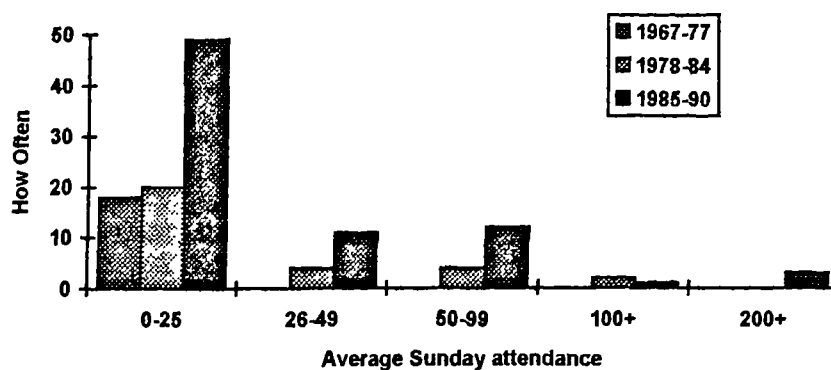
Recent work by George Lings on Anglican church plants in England has demonstrated clear growth in numbers. Most church-plants (about 70%) in the period 1967-90 began

<sup>35</sup> *ibid.* statistics obtained from the appropriate denominational tables, pp.23-43



with fewer than 25 people attending on a Sunday. In the first period of this data-series, 1967-77, there were no church plants started with more than 25 people.<sup>36</sup>

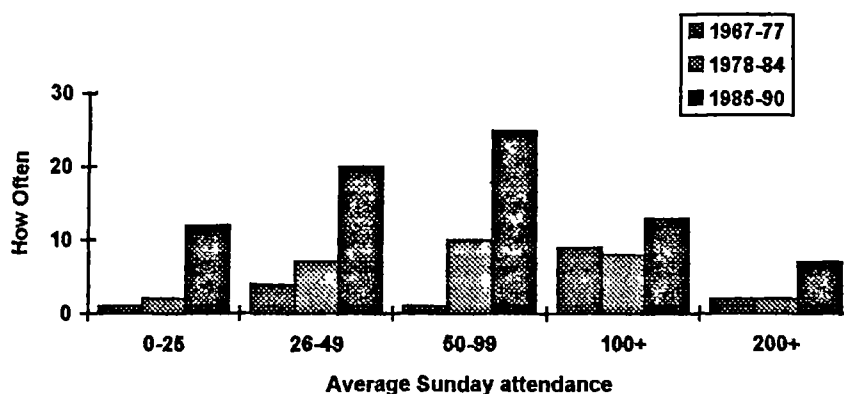
Figure 1.2 Congregation Size at start of plant



In the two subsequent periods about a third of church plants began with teams larger than 25, but "there is little evidence of a drift towards big church plants becoming the norm."<sup>37</sup>

This can be compared with the size of the church plants at the time of this survey set out in figure 1.3. Note that there is no account taken of the different ages of the congregations.

Figure 1.3 Size of Attendance at plant  
(in March 1991)



<sup>36</sup> George Lings "A Time to Plant" in Hopkins *Planting New Churches*, p.174

<sup>37</sup>*ibid.* p.175

Of church-plants over 5 years old only 7% have fewer than 25 attending on a normal Sunday. Though most church plants have begun with less than 25 attending they have usually grown to an attendance of around 100. On average during this period, for every person who began in a church plant three more have joined. Where the individuals have come from can not be determined from Lings' information.

#### A limit to growth:

Lings also refers to the work of David Wasdell in the 1970's.<sup>38</sup> He showed a clear pattern of limitation on attendance in Anglican churches: the percentage of the parish attending declined as the parish size increased. In particular, a congregation of 200 seemed to be the maximum for a church with a single clergyman.

The same phenomenon was observed by the Rural Church Project in 1990. Although average Anglican church attendance in a benefice increased with population, the percentage attending church declined, from 8.1% in parishes with a population of less than a thousand, to 1.4% in parishes with a population of 10,000 and over.<sup>39</sup> Indeed, the average attendance for the largest parishes was 200.6 (adults and children), in remarkable agreement with Wasdell's findings. The overall church attendance will be higher than 2% in more built up areas because there are more churches of other denominations.

These last pieces of research demonstrate that larger populations do support larger churches, but also that the growth in church size is much less than the growth in population. Such findings have helped to motivate calls to church planting.

### 1.3 Transfer growth and church planting

The point at issue is not whether church plants can grow: the evidence is clear that in the main they do. What is not clearly established so far in the English church scene is their ability to increase the overall church-going rate. The work of Wasdell has shown the problems with existing parish structures, little has changed since his report: but does church planting make a significant difference to the overall attendance rate across denominations?

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<sup>38</sup> David Wasdell *Urban Church Work Papers 1.1 & 1.2*

<sup>39</sup> Douglas Davies et al *Rural Church Project Vol. III* p.27 table 5.1.24

A recent survey of 58 Baptist church plants<sup>40</sup> attempted to find out about the kinds of growth and losses in the church plants contacted but were unable to do so, although their other questions were answered. It is an indication of the difficulty of this kind of research.

There is evidence from the city of York that significant growth in one church may well be at the expense of other churches.<sup>41</sup> For example, complete attendance records exist from 1837 to 1877 for the 4 parishes clustered near the Minster: St Sampson, St Helen, St Michael and St Martin. As changes of incumbent and of service times occurred so one would increase and another decline, but the overall church-going rate was similar to others obtained for each period. As Gill puts it, *"It is difficult to escape the conclusion that individual congregations did tend to prosper at the expense of their neighbours."*<sup>42</sup> This was not a church planting issue as such, but illustrates how one church can grow by transfer growth, and cause other churches to decline in numbers.

A similar problem has been raised about the large Baptist churches at Gold Hill and the Millmead centre, Guildford which have grown partly by the transfer of Christians from other local churches, to the extent that some other churches have closed.<sup>43</sup>

It is possible that the growth of church plants is mainly at the expense of other churches, which lose disaffected members. They may also be growing by attracting Christians who move into an area, Christians who would have attended a church anyway. If that is so then church-going rates in such areas should be similar to rates in comparable areas. Both forms of recruitment come under the heading of **transfer growth** in the terminology of the CGM.

Transfer growth has been defined as

*"the recruitment of members who are already committed Christians, by transfer from other congregations"*<sup>44</sup>.

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<sup>40</sup> R. Sutton and A. Argile *Radiate*

<sup>41</sup> Gill *op. cit.* chapter 9 provides the details

<sup>42</sup> *ibid.*, p.230

<sup>43</sup> Conversation with Paul Beasley-Murray, former Principal of Spurgeon's College, 19th September 1994

<sup>44</sup> Roy Pointer *How Do Churches grow?*, p.26 my italics

Reasons mentioned by Pointer include moving house, doctrinal issues and social factors. Attention is also drawn to the charge that house churches had grown largely through transfer from other churches. This book was written before the current high profile of church planting in Britain<sup>45</sup> but it indicates the sensitivity of the issue of transfer growth, especially when new ways of working are being introduced.

The writing of current church planting practitioners reveals some of their own sensitivity to the charge (for that is what it is) of growing by transfers. For example, Pytches and Skinner recognise that a church plant which crossed a parish boundary "might drain off a number from the congregation of the neighbouring parish church"<sup>46</sup>. Such a situation highlights the need for "mutual respect" and "openness" but they also point out that any congregation can lose members through disaffection. Their "primary concern throughout" is "for evangelistic outreach". This suggests that increasing church attendance rates is an important criterion for the judging success or otherwise of church planting.

The more weighty work by Robinson and Christine makes similar points. They emphasise the importance of inter-church consultation and co-operation before beginning a church plant. They express the fear "that the result will only be to slice the 'Christian cake' more thinly."<sup>47</sup> Like Pytches and Skinner, they describe the purpose of church planting as being "to reach those who have no Christian allegiance, those who are unchurched." They even point out that a new church may attract disruptive and difficult members from other churches, to its own detriment and that it is therefore helpful to discourage transference of membership not supported by the existing church.<sup>48</sup>

The Baptist church at the village of Creech St Michael, near Taunton, Somerset has been used as an example of church planting in a rural context. This church has grown rapidly over the last decade (from 35 members in 1981 to over 300 in 1991) and is now involved in a programme of church planting. (This is not the terminology of David Goodyear, the senior pastor: in his view they have one church, with several congregations.<sup>49</sup> For practical purposes in considering the effect on total churchgoing in the area there is little difference, though.)

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<sup>45</sup> "church planting is a neglected but major strategy for evangelisation" *ibid.*, p.152

<sup>46</sup> David Pytches & Brian Skinner *New Wineskins* p. 19

<sup>47</sup> Martin Robinson & Stuart Christine *Planting Tomorrow's Churches Today*, p.153

<sup>48</sup> *ibid.* p.154

<sup>49</sup> see his article in *Church Growth Digest* year 12 issue 2, p.1

Caution about the effect of this growth has been expressed by a fellow Baptist and advocate of church planting, Graham Licence. Having acknowledged their evangelistic work and dramatic growth he was left wondering "how many members might have been tempted to come from other, smaller, churches"<sup>50</sup> since members were accepted from an area 15 miles across and there are other Baptist churches in the town.

It is not self-evident even to enthusiasts that church planting from a successful church is always the best way to promote church growth overall in a given area.

#### 1.4 The effect of location

Transfer growth may make a church plant possible: Eric Westwood, the Baptist Union president for 1992-3, has commented

*"that most of the places where church planting is happening are places where we are seeing the migration of Christians into new areas. It is much more difficult to think about church planting in a situation where the population has been static... there is a sociological factor with the migration of Christians into an area that stimulates and creates the opportunity for church planting."*<sup>51</sup>

He goes on to cite as an example the planting of a new church in Morpeth, Northumberland:

*"Morpeth has been one of those situations where the whole possibility of creating a church plant arose through the moving in of Christians. The main strength of the growth of that church has been the migration of people into the area. There have been people converted and added to the church but essentially it's been a migratory situation."*

These comments are important in pointing up two different circumstances for church planting: first, in an area of new or significantly expanding housing new churches can grow because committed Christians move into the area; this is relatively straightforward. Second, church planting can be tried in an area where the population is more static, but

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<sup>50</sup> Graham Licence *Rural Church-planting?*, p.27

<sup>51</sup> Eric Westwood *Planting Papers* No. 7, p.8

there is a perceived weakness in church attendance. As Westwood points out this is much harder. However, it is also necessary if church planting is to be a genuinely missionary strategy.

The observation on mobility of Christians leading to new congregations is in accord with work by Gill on the fluidity of congregations in the rapidly expanding urban areas of the early nineteenth century. In the period 1821-51, "Urban areas undergoing rapid shifts of population were experiencing rapid changes in differential strengths and weaknesses within and between denominations."<sup>52</sup>

A dramatic illustration of growth and a desire to combat Free Church influence is provided by the diocese of Chester, which had the fastest growing population of any diocese in the Church of England in the first half of the nineteenth century. It seems possible that the attendances at Anglican churches in the diocese grew faster than the population explosion and certainly faster than the Free Churches.<sup>53</sup> It was achieved through structural changes which *"differ little from present-day church growth techniques. The most demanding was undoubtedly what would today be termed church planting."*<sup>54</sup>

However, Westwood's observations of the Baptist scene (that most plants have been in areas of new housing) are not borne out by Lings' statistics for recent Church of England church plants<sup>55</sup>: in the period 1967-77 about half the church plants occurred because of opportunities given by new housing. By the period 1985-90, though, this was the reason given in only 14% of cases. The main reasons stated by churches involved in planting were identifying parts of a parish where few came to church, having a building which was already full for Sunday worship and having an underlying philosophy of growth. If these are accurate then we should expect higher overall church-going rates (i.e. across denominations) in such areas than in comparable ones where no church planting is happening. If practised on a large enough scale it would also have an impact on the overall church attendance figures. Further research would be useful to assess this point.

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<sup>52</sup> *op cit.* p.104

<sup>53</sup> *ibid.* p.114

<sup>54</sup> *ibid.* p.116

<sup>55</sup> *op. cit.* p.165f

## 1.5 Summary

1. Church growth terms are useful in investigating numerical growth, but are not always sufficiently nuanced to reflect the realities of individual lives.
2. Most new adult attenders at churches in England have a previous church connection.
3. Church planting usually leads to growing congregations
4. Transfer growth is a factor in the growth
5. The extent and type of transfer growth is not established

## Chapter Two

### Growth rates calculated from previous church growth surveys:

### examples in which little church planting occurred

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In this chapter the attempt is made to establish some empirical benchmarks on the extent of types of growth amongst churches not involved in church planting, and especially the extent of transfer growth. This exercise is necessary because figures on the rate of transfer growth in congregations are not readily obtainable: this is true for churches not currently church planting as well as those which are.

Literature searches in text books on church growth and church planting produced no figures on the likely levels of transfer growth. Searches were undertaken at the University of Kent, using their own library and other likely libraries, via the Internet link. The library at Spurgeon's College, South London has a large number of books on church growth from around the world: all such books argue for the importance of gathering accurate statistics but give no figures for likely rates of growth. A computer search of journal articles also produced nothing on this subject.

The nearest approaches to such data so far have come mainly from a few limited research documents produced by Peter Brierley and unpublished figures supplied by Pioneer churches. Some limited findings from Baptist churches have come from material supplied by Paul Beasley-Murray; these are used for comparison with the other findings where possible. This chapter and the subsequent one examine these previous surveys and seek to tease out details relating to rates of growth to provide a more coherent basis for subsequent comparisons than has hitherto existed.

The approach employed has some similarities to the currently fashionable meta-analysis used to bring together a range of clinical trials for particular medical conditions. The methodology of meta-analysis in medicine remains a subject of debate<sup>1</sup> and this suggests that comparisons between surveys must remain cautious. The small number of church research documents in this field means that it is not possible to be as thorough in the analysis of church growth as medical research seeks to be.

However, in this chapter the first four surveys discussed were undertaken by the same investigator and used similar methods. Since these were also all carried out on Anglican churches it gives a reasonable degree of confidence in making comparisons with my own survey which was also carried out on Anglican churches.

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<sup>1</sup> e.g. S. G. Thompson *Why Sources of heterogeneity in meta-analysis should be investigated* BMJ 1994; vol. 309; pp.1351-5

## 2.1 Changes in Electoral Rolls in the Diocese of Rochester, 1991-3

In 1992 and 1993 MARC Europe added an extra one-page form to those sent to all benefices in the diocese of Rochester in preparation for the Archdeacon's visitation reports.<sup>2</sup> The intention was to examine the reasons behind changes in Electoral Roll numbers and to gain a better idea of the scale of movement.

Across the sixteen deaneries, the response rate was 92% in 1992 and 88% in 1993; the results were grossed up on a Deanery basis using previous years' figures.

Not surprisingly, the overall changes over one year periods were fairly small: an increase in 1991-2 from 35,439 to 35,987, 1.5% as reported in 1992 and corrected in the later report to an increase from 36,230 to 36,953, 2.0%. In the period 1992-3 the increase was from 36,953 to 37,335, 1.0%. The vast majority of benefices (162 out of 201: 81%) showed a change of 10 or less in their electoral roll figure.<sup>3</sup> On the basis of the overall figures it would appear that the congregations of the diocese were relatively static.

However, churchwardens were asked how many had left and joined in the year. This revealed in 1992 that the overall gain of 538 "was made up of 2,619 additions and 2,071 losses. This is respectively 7% and 6% of the 1992 Roll."<sup>4</sup>

The number of individuals involved in movement is larger than might have been predicted. As subsequent research shows, this is not untypical of the amount of movement in and out of church membership, and the figures for 1993 are similar as the following table 2.1 shows. For 1993 the gains are 6.5% of the Electoral Rolls and the losses 5.5%. Though the overall numbers give a static impression this more detailed questioning revealed considerable movement. The variation at the parish level is only given in terms of actual numbers joining or leaving. Since these are not given as percentages of the Electoral Rolls detailed comparison of parishes is difficult.

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<sup>2</sup> Peter Brierley *Electoral Roll Change in the Diocese of Rochester*, p.1 and *Rochester on the Move!*

<sup>3</sup> *Electoral Roll Changes*, pp.2-3. Please note that separate references have not been given to the 1993 report which follows nearly the same format as the 1992 report.

<sup>4</sup> *ibid.*, p.5

### 2.1.1 Joining the Electoral Roll

One question on the survey asked for the reasons people joined the Electoral Roll. The results are given in table 2.1:

Table 2.1 Reasons why people joined the Electoral Roll, Rochester, 1992-3<sup>5</sup>

	1992		1993	
	No.	%	No.	%
New people coming into the church from non-church background	890	34	850	35
Transfer into the church from another Anglican church	760	29	680	28
Children becoming old enough to join whose parents are members	262	10	194	8
Transfer into the church from a church of another denomination	157	6	170	7
Children becoming old enough to join, parents are not members	-	-	24	1
Other reasons	550	21	513	21
Total	2,619	100	2,431	100

#### Transfer growth:

From this table we find that in 1992 transfer growth was 35% of the total growth. It was probably higher in fact, because of the large number of 'other reasons' given. When comparisons are made in chapter 6 it suggested that perhaps nearer half the growth in these diocesan surveys will be transfer growth. However, in this chapter it is necessary to work with the figures as given in the table.

The stated transfer growth represents 2.5% of the 1991 Electoral Roll. The ratio of Anglicans to non-Anglicans is about 4.8. In 1993, transfer growth was 34% of total growth, 2.3% of the 1992 Electoral Roll. The ratio of Anglicans to non-Anglicans is about 4.0.

The commentary by Brierley in the 1992 report suggests that this number of non-Anglican transfers may be small, but illustrates the problem highlighted by this thesis: "*there are no other figures (in previous years or other Dioceses) with which to compare it*".<sup>6</sup> This comment from a leading researcher of church growth in Britain strengthens the case for

<sup>5</sup> *ibid.*, p.7 adapted from Table 7 of the two reports

empirical studies of the kind undertaken in this thesis. It also gives greater confidence in the negative finding in the literature searches for previous such work.<sup>7</sup>

The following table introduces a means of breaking down the transfer rates<sup>8</sup> which enables comparison with transfer rates in this survey and others.

Table 2.2 Types of transfer growth as a percentage of Electoral Roll, Rochester, '92-3

	same denomination	changed denomination	totals
moved house			not available
did not move house			not available
totals	2.1%/1.8%	0.4%/0.5%	2.5%/2.3%

Table 2.2 gives the mean rates of transfer growth over the whole diocese. When the deanery figures for the reasons for joining are examined, there are substantial variations between deaneries in all categories. (The reports go to deanery level but no smaller.) For example, in 1992, they range from 14% to 47% of new members being Anglican transfers, and from 0% to 14% being transfers from other denominations. On the basis of the available figures I have calculated the median values, the quartiles and the standard deviation of the percentage of Anglican and non-Anglican joiners for both 1992 and 1993.

Table 2.3 Variation between deaneries in rates of transfer growth, Rochester, 1992-3

Percentage transferring into the church, proportion of total growth from	Min	L.Q.	Median	U.Q.	Max	S.d.
<b>1992</b>						
... another Anglican church	14	20	27	37	47	10.35
... a church of another denomination	0	3	6	9	14	4.00
<b>1993</b>						
... another Anglican church	8	19	22	38	44	11.78
... a church of another denomination	1	3	4	9	37	8.89

L. Q. = Lower Quartile, U. Q. = Upper Quartile s.d. = standard deviation

<sup>6</sup> *ibid.*, p.7

<sup>7</sup> This is an example of the expectation of high levels of denominational fluidity. The results of the survey reported in chapter 6 and of the qualitative interviews discussed in chapter 13 will throw doubt on that expectation, at least in an Anglican context.

<sup>8</sup> from figures recorded in table 2.1

The variations between individual parishes are even greater than between deaneries. The purpose of investigating these variations is to provide some guidelines in assessing whether or not the amount of transfer growth in a particular parish might be considered reasonable. It has to be noted that the lack of individual parish figures means that the variation between parishes is understated by the deanery figures given. Two methods of calculating guidelines are described next.

The first method is to calculate the standard deviation about the mean as shown in table 2.3. This is particularly useful in the case of a Normal distribution since 67% of results lie within 1 s.d. of the mean.<sup>9</sup> However, with only 16 deaneries this is not really enough to show that there is a Normal distribution: clustering the percentages in bands of 5% (10-14% etc.) gives a hint, but no more, that there may be a Normal distribution of rates of transfer growth. The s.d. values are given for comparison with the inter-quartile range (IQR), and for future reference as and when further results are obtained.

To avoid the problem of the uneven distribution it is possible to calculate the lower and upper quartiles to obtain the range of values within which 50% of the values lie.<sup>10</sup> These filter out extreme values and so provide rough boundaries to expected values; however, it must be emphasized that the boundaries for parishes will be further apart than those for deaneries because of the averaging effect.

Having ranked the deaneries for types of growth on the basis of the percentage of growth it was then desired to find corresponding boundaries for types of growth as a percentage of the total Electoral Roll in each deanery. This was done by calculating back from the percentages in the original report, and using the Electoral Roll figures<sup>11</sup> because the deaneries are not all the same size. The necessity of this method is shown by this example: in 1992 two deaneries both had 3% of their growth through non-Anglican transfers (Cobham and Sevenoaks) but as a percentage of their Electoral Rolls it was 0.2% and 0.1% respectively.

From these calculations we find that in 1992 the IQR for Anglican transfers was from 1.3% to 2.3% of the Electoral Rolls, with a median value of 1.8%, and for non-Anglican

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<sup>9</sup> M. J. Moroney *Facts from Figures*, p.62

<sup>10</sup> *op. cit.*, p.58f

<sup>11</sup> *op. cit.*, p.2

transfers it was from 0.1% to 0.5%, with a median of 0.3%. In 1993 the corresponding figures were 0.9% to 2.0% for Anglican transfers, median 1.5%, and 0.1% to 0.6% for non-Anglican transfers, median 0.3%. This shows how there can be considerable variation from year to year even across a whole diocese. It is an indication that we should not be surprised by fluctuations from year to year in individual parishes.

These figures must be regarded as very tentative guidelines, being based on one diocese in just two years. Nonetheless, they do provide a guide from figures across the spectrum of Anglican churches. All the relevant figures of this kind are summarised in tables 2.34 and 2.35, where all the surveys are compared.

#### Conversion and restoration growth:

A similar proportion of the joiners (34% in 1992, 35% in 1993) were described as new to the church, coming from a non-church background.<sup>12</sup> As percentages of the Electoral Rolls these are 2.5% in 1992 and 2.3% in 1993. Following the implications of the reports this group of joiners is called converts in the discussion, though the term must be understood to have a broad range of meaning in this context.

If children becoming old enough to join whose parents are not members were included as converts the percentage of converts becomes 36% of the growth in 1993, which is 2.4% of the Electoral Rolls.

As with transfers there was considerable variation from deanery to deanery and hence from parish to parish. These variations are summed up in table 2.4, as obtained from the two reports.

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<sup>12</sup> It is important to remember that this category, like all those in this survey, depends on the assessment of someone other than the individual joining. The different methodologies of the self-administered survey in chapter 6 and of the qualitative interviews will develop the concerns expressed in chapter about the difficulties of some of the church growth definitions.



Table 2.4 Variation between deaneries in rates of conversion growth, Rochester, '92-3

Percentage figures on conversion growth, as proportion of total growth						
	Min	L.Q	Median	U.Q.	Max	S.d.
1992	16	25	30	45	63	13.24
1993	13	26	37	49	60	14.49

The percentages in table 2.4 are those of the people joining classified as new to the church. In the same way as with the rates of transfer growth we can calculate some rough boundaries to the variation by calculating the IQR. Expressed as percentages of the total Electoral Rolls these work out as 1.3% to 3.0%, with a median of 2.2% in 1992, and 1.4% to 2.7%, with a median of 2.0% in 1993.

### 2.1.2 Leaving the Electoral Rolls

A similar question was asked about those leaving Electoral Rolls. The percentage in the 'other' category was much smaller than in the table for those joining. The report commented "it was very clear from the forms that churchwardens were much more easily able to identify the reasons why people left the Roll than they could why people had joined."<sup>13</sup> A possible exception to this is noted below in the remarks on loss of faith.

Table 2.5 Reasons why people left the Electoral Roll, Rochester, 1992-3<sup>14</sup>

	1992		1993	
	No.	%	No.	%
Moving to another area/parish	933	45	887	43
Death	600	29	512	25
Loss of faith/commitment/involvement	207	10	325	16
Transferring to another church, but not physically moving	186	9	225	11
Other reasons	145*	7	100	5
Total	2,071	100	2,049	100

\*More than half this figure came from one church which gave an unidentifiable reason

In both years the main reason people left the Roll was through moving house. Together with the number of deaths, these account for about 70% of the losses. The number of

<sup>13</sup> *Electoral Roll Changes*, p.12

transfers to another church, without a house move is 9% of the losses, 0.5% of the total Roll in 1992 and 11% of the losses, 0.6% of the total Roll in 1993. This is not directly comparable with the table for gains since that distinguished between denominations, this between moving and not moving. It happens that people transfer to another church of the same denomination in their area, as well as to other denominations.

Loss of faith and other reasons for leaving:

The reason entitled “Loss of faith/commitment/involvement” is not as clear-cut as the other categories for movement away from the church. Loss of faith is a much more interior reason, loss of involvement could simply mean not coming along any more; indeed, this latter could almost be a tautology: they are not on the Roll because they are not involved. Even if we take the category as it stands it is a relatively small proportion of those leaving.

The expectation of Brierley is indicated by his comment on this figure: *“Loss of faith or commitment or involvement in the life of the church sees another 180 people leave the Rolls, equivalent to 1 person in 200 in total. Such a very small loss rate for this reason seems almost too good to be true”*<sup>15</sup>.

(Note that I have used the figure of 207 in my version of the table on the basis of the total number of people who have left the Roll.)

The assumption made by Brierley seems to be that many more people would leave through loss of faith. He goes on to add almost in surprise this quotation: “it may take a long time for people to become Christian, but when they are converted, they usually stay for life”. Yet this survey is further evidence in support of his quotation.

It is not the only evidence of this kind: a survey in 1962 asked Methodist ministers to identify why people lapsed from membership. Of 357 case studies only 2 gave ‘loss of faith’ as the reason. The most frequent comment was “I seem to have lost interest” and complaints about difficulties in joining a new congregation: nearly a third lapsed from membership when moving from one area to another.<sup>16</sup>

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<sup>14</sup> *ibid.*, p.11 adapted from Table 10

<sup>15</sup> *ibid.*, p.11

<sup>16</sup> J.R. Butler *The London Quarterly and Holborn Review*, July 1966, p.243, cited in Gill, p.213

More recent work by Brierley has recognised the significance of the difficulty in joining a new church experienced by people moving area. He describes it as a 'timing variation' or 'timing difference'.<sup>17</sup> This recognition is a helpful refinement of the work on types of church growth and loss. The details of the work cited are not very reliable, depending on extrapolation of statistics obtained in different ways, and further research focussed on the issue of delays in transferring church would be useful.

The assumption by Christian leaders of the importance of loss of faith is not uncommon. A Baptist minister surveyed 509 people who had left churches: under the heading Loss of Faith he writes that he "was surprised to find that only 7% ... felt that God had let them down in some way."<sup>18</sup>

There were other people who felt this factor had contributed to their leaving church membership but this research found the most frequent reasons for leaving were irrelevance, boredom and lack of belonging.<sup>19</sup>

A later survey by Gibbs, analysed by Brierley, indicates that "serious doubts about the Christian religion" can be an important factor in leading to non-attendance at church services. 67% of the sample cited this as a factor, the second equal highest score of any factor.<sup>20</sup> However, with the exception of belief in the divine inspiration of the Bible, there were no significant differences in the patterns of belief between those who had stopped going to church and those who had not stopped going.<sup>21</sup>

There were some differences between the countries surveyed: 86% of the Scottish respondents cited doubt as a factor leading to non-attendance<sup>22</sup>, whereas American respondents were more orthodox even when no longer attending church.<sup>23</sup> The sample was fairly small (308 people in four countries<sup>24</sup>) so it would be unwise to make too much of these findings but they do suggest that in England intellectual doubts are not a major

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<sup>17</sup> Brierley *Changing Churches*, p.16f

<sup>18</sup> M.J. Fanstone *The Sheep that got Away*, p.79

<sup>19</sup> *ibid.*, p.62

<sup>20</sup> Gibbs, *op. cit.*, p.278, Table 9

<sup>21</sup> *ibid.*, p.279

<sup>22</sup> *ibid.*, p.280

<sup>23</sup> *ibid.*, p.285

<sup>24</sup> *ibid.*, p.269

cause of non-attendance. They can, though, be real and strengthen a decision perhaps reached for other reasons.

#### Transfer losses:

The following table sets out the available figures<sup>25</sup> for transfers out in the same format as in table 2.2 for transfers in:

Table 2.6 Types of transfer loss, Rochester, 1992-3

	same denomination	changed denomination	totals
moved house			2.5%/2.4%
did not move house			0.5%/0.6%
totals	not available	not available	3.0%/3.0%

As with transfers in, there are wide variations between deaneries on the percentages transferring out. The following table is calculated in a similar way to table 2.3 above.

Table 2.7 Variation between deaneries in reasons for leaving Electoral Rolls, Rochester, 1992-3

Percentage transferring from the church, as proportion of losses	Min	L.Q.	Median	U.Q.	Max	S.d.
<b>1992</b>						
Moving to another area/parish	17	41	47	55	61	10.85
Transferring to another church, but not physically moving	0	6	8	12	18	5.37
<b>1993</b>						
Moving to another area/parish	29	39	43	50	57	7.73
Transferring to another church, but not physically moving	2	5	8	14	22	5.53

In 1992 much of the variation in the percentage who had moved away arose from one deanery, which saw only 17% of its loss in this way. Otherwise in most deaneries nearly half the loss came about because of a house move.

<sup>25</sup> figures recorded in table 2.4

On the same basis used above for transfers the IQR can be calculated for percentages of the total Electoral Rolls. In 1992 the IQR of those moving area was from 1.8% to 3.0%, with a median of 2.2%, while for those only moving church the IQR was from 0.1% to 0.5%, with a median of 0.3%. The corresponding figures for 1993 were from 1.7% to 2.6%, with a median of 2.2% for those moving area, and from 0.2% to 0.7%, with a median of 0.4% for those only moving church.

As before and in subsequent discussions the limitations of these guideline figures must be remembered: they are based on deanery rather than parish figures; and in some cases large percentage figures are found because of the small size of congregations. However, if these figures are regarded as a first attempt to establish objective, numerical criteria I believe they have some usefulness. In particular, the two limitations mentioned will tend to work in opposite directions.

Comparison of joining and leaving figures as percentages of Electoral Rolls shows some interesting features: for example, in 1991-2 the deanery of Gravesend had the lowest rate of Anglican transfers in and of those moving away. At the other end of the scale, the deanery of Tonbridge had the highest rate of Anglican transfers in and the second highest rate of those moving away. This suggests, as might be suspected, that variation in both these measures is linked to local rates of population movement.

This was examined in more detail by calculating the Spearman Rank Correlation Coefficient ( $R$ )<sup>26</sup> of the lists of Anglican transfers in and of those moving away. In 1992 this value was 0.606 (where 1 would indicate complete correlation in the rankings of the two lists). Its significance is tested by the value of Student's  $t$ , which is 2.85. This is about the 1% level of  $t$  with 14 degrees of freedom ( $n-2$ ), so there is a significant degree of agreement between the two rankings in 1992. In 1993 the value of  $R$  was much lower ( $<0.25$ ) and this was not statistically significant. It is not known why this should be significant in one year and not in the other. Possible correlation and inverse correlation in the rankings of new people and transfers in were tested but there were no statistically significant results.

Another example of features in individual deaneries is found in the deanery of Gillingham in 1992-3: this deanery saw dramatic shifts of church membership. 2.4% of the Electoral

Rolls were transfers in from non-Anglican churches, while at the same time 1.9% transferred out. Whether these are to Anglican churches or other denominations is not known for sure, though one would suspect that many of them are the same people moving one church to another in the deanery.

## 2.2 Changes in Electoral Rolls in the Diocese of St Albans, 1991-2

MARC Europe undertook the same exercise for the diocese of St Albans for the period 1991-2 and published the results in a similar format to those in the reports on the diocese of Rochester already discussed above. In this section I therefore provide the same tables with limited discussion, to enable further empirical comparisons to be made.

The response rate was excellent at 94%.

Overall, the Electoral Rolls were 51,723 in 1991 and 52,767 in 1992, an increase of 2.0%.<sup>27</sup> As in the diocese of Rochester there was considerably more movement than this figure might suggest: the overall gain was made up of 3,441 people joining and 2,449 leaving. In other words over 11% of the individuals on the Electoral Rolls have changed. Further details are set out below.

### 2.2.1 Joining the Electoral Roll

Table 2.8 Reasons why people joined the Electoral Roll, St Albans, 1992<sup>28</sup>

	No.	%
New people coming into the church from non-church background	995	29
Transfer into the church from another Anglican church	1450	42
Children becoming old enough to join whose parents are members	345	10
Transfer into the church from a church of another denomination	250	7
Other reasons	401	12
Total	3,441	100

<sup>26</sup> Moroney *Facts from Figures*, p.334ff gives details of the formulae

<sup>27</sup> Peter Brierley *Electoral Roll change in the diocese of St Albans*, p.2

<sup>28</sup> *ibid.*, p.12

In 1992 49% of the growth was transfer growth of some kind, compared with about 35% in the two Rochester surveys. This represents 3.3% of the 1991 Electoral Rolls. The ratio of Anglicans to non-Anglicans is about 6.0, showing a very low level of denominational fluidity.

Table 2.9 brings the transfer growth rates together as percentages of the 1991 Electoral Roll:

Table 2.9 Types of transfer growth, St Alban's, 1992

	same denomination	changed denomination	totals
moved house			not available
did not move house			not available
totals	2.8%	0.5%	3.3%

As in Rochester there are considerable variations between deaneries, analysed as before, and recorded in table 2.10.

Table 2.10 Variation between deaneries in rates of transfer growth, St Albans, 1992<sup>29</sup>

Percentage figures on transfer into the church, as a proportion of total growth	Min	L.Q.	Median	U.Q.	Max	S. d.
...from another Anglican church	29	37	43	49	61	8.57
...from a church of another denomination	0	3	5	8	18	4.60

Calculating the IQR. guidelines previously used, we find that Anglican transfers were from 2.3% to 3.5% of the Electoral Roll in one year, with a median of 2.9%. The corresponding figures for non-Anglican transfers were 0.3% and 0.5%, with a median of 0.3%.

The proportion of people new to the church, converts in the sense described in the discussion of the Rochester surveys, was 29% of the total growth, 1.9% of the 1991 Electoral Rolls. This is somewhat lower than the figures from Rochester, which is slightly surprising since the Rochester surveys had nearly twice as many in the 'other reasons' category (21% against 12%). The deanery variations are recorded in table 2.11:

Table 2.11 Variation between deaneries in rates of conversion growth, St Albans, 1992

	Min	L.Q.	Median	U.Q.	Max	S.d.
Percentage figures on conversion growth, proportion of total growth	12	20	25	40	51	11.66

The median conversion growth rate was 1.6% of the 1991 Electoral Rolls, while the IQR was from 1.2% to 2.8%. The higher end of the range is similar to the results in the Rochester deaneries, but the mean and the median are distinctly lower.

### 2.2.2 Leaving the Electoral Rolls

The question on reasons for leaving the Electoral Roll results in the table 2.12 on the following page:

Table 2.12 Reasons why people left the Electoral Roll, St Albans, 1991-2<sup>30</sup>

	No.	%
Moving to another area/parish	1154	47
Death	905	37
Loss of faith/commitment/involvement	190	8
Transferring to another church, but not physically moving	150	6
Other reasons	50	2
Total	2449	100

As would be expected, the main reason for leaving the Electoral Roll was a house move. With the number of deaths, these two groups account for 84% of the total losses, an even higher proportion of the losses than in the Rochester surveys. Those transferring to another church without a house move are 6% of the total loss, which is 0.3% of the total Rolls.

A summary of transfer losses is given in table 2.13 below:

<sup>29</sup> *ibid.*, p.14. This and my table 2.11 are calculated from table 10 of the report

<sup>30</sup> *ibid.*, p.15



Table 2.13 Types of transfer loss, St Albans diocese, 1992

% of Electoral Roll	same denomination	changed denomination	totals
moved house			2.2%
did not move house			0.3%
totals	not available	not available	2.5%

The variations in these figures between deaneries work out as follows in table 2.14:

Table 2.14 Variation between deaneries in reasons for leaving Electoral Rolls, St Albans, 1992

Percentage figures on transfer from the church, as a proportion of total losses	Min	L.Q.	Median	U.Q.	Max	S.d.
Moving to another area/parish	28	41	48	57	70	10.67
Transferring to another church, but not physically moving	0	2	4	7	21	4.75

The deanery which recorded 21% transferring to another church without moving was rather unusual; the next highest figure in this category was 10%. Most of the 21% loss was from two churches in that deanery.<sup>31</sup> Even when averaged across the deanery, 1.1% of the total Electoral Rolls transferred to other churches without moving; the next highest figure in the diocese was 0.6%.

The IQR is from 1.7% to 2.9% of the Electoral Roll moving house in a given year, with a median of 2.2%, and from 0.0% to 0.3% transferring church without moving house. The median value was 0.2%.

As in the case of Rochester, the Spearman Rank Correlation Coefficient was calculated to compare rankings in the lists of Anglican transfers in and those moving away.

<sup>31</sup> *ibid.*, p.17. Though not stated in the report, people joined an unauthorised cross-boundary church plant. The publicity around this church plant was one of the motivating factors in starting the present thesis.

$R = 0.213$ ,  $t = 0.975$ . With 20 degrees of freedom this is not statistically significant.

This means there was again no statistical link between the rate of transfer growth and transfer losses. It might have been expected that there was such a link, via a local rate of house moving. The absence of a link indicates that the sample of Anglican church attenders is too small to be representative of the population which is moving house, and that other factors are important in the maintenance of churchgoing.

### 2.3 Movement in the Kent Baptist Association, 1980-1990

Also in 1992 MARC Europe were asked to report on growth and decline in Kent Baptist churches during the 1980's. The report<sup>32</sup> does not use exactly the same categories as the Rochester report discussed above but it is possible to make some comparisons, which provide a check with another denomination in a similar locality as the surveys of the Anglican diocese of Rochester. (The diocese of Rochester essentially covers west Kent, the Kent Baptist Association (KBA) the whole county.)

Information was obtained from the KBA Annual Reports, "not totally consistent across the years" and interpreted as well as possible by Brierley.<sup>33</sup> Overall membership (note that the figures relate to membership not attenders) went from 6,376 in 1980 to 6,589 in 1990, an increase of 213 or 3%.<sup>34</sup> This relatively small change conceals much larger changes in the four districts, ranging from a loss of 13% to a gain of 23% in this 10 year period.

As was discovered from the Electoral Roll figures described above there was considerable movement of individuals. In the 1980's 5,913 people joined KBA churches, while 5,712 left (this includes deaths). The net gain of 201 (not 141 as given by Brierley) differs from the figure of 213 above because of discrepancies in the KBA Year Books. The gains and losses are set out in the following tables as percentages of the previous year's membership.

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<sup>32</sup> Peter Brierley *Towards the Future*

<sup>33</sup> Private communication 7th March 1994

<sup>34</sup> *op. cit.* p.2

Table 2.15 Membership Losses, KBA<sup>35</sup>Table 2.16 Membership Gains, KBA<sup>36</sup>

District	1980	1985	1990	1980	1985	1990
East Kent	9%	9%	7%	8%	7%	7%
Medway	11%	9%	7%	10%	8%	9%
Sevenoaks	6%	7%	9%	6%	8%	7%
South Kent	11%	7%	7%	8%	14%	8%
Overall	9%	9%	8%	8%	8%	8%

The amount of movement is a little higher than that revealed in the Anglican figures. The breakdown of how members were gained and lost can be compared with the Anglican figures only to a limited extent because of the differences in the categories used.

Table 2.17 Types of Membership Gain, Kent Baptist Association, 1980-90<sup>37</sup>

Type of growth	Number	Percentage
Baptism	2,306	39%
Transfer from another church	1,656	28%
Testimony/renewal	1,951	33%
Total	5,913	100%

The average transfers in each year are therefore 28% of 9% (the overall gain on average). This works out at 2.6% of the membership per year. It is not entirely clear whether the transfers are from all denominations or just from Baptist churches. However, Peter Brierley is of the view that it is all denominations and conversation with a Baptist minister also indicated that was the most likely case. (Not every Baptist Association collects such figures from its member churches and so there is no national criterion for checking this.) Using the same format for transfer growth as previously we can form the following table:

<sup>35</sup> *ibid.* Table 4, p.2

<sup>36</sup> *ibid.* Table 5, p.3

<sup>37</sup> *ibid.* p.4, adapted from Table 8

Table 2.18 Types of transfer growth in KBA churches, 1980-90

	same denomination	changed denomination	totals
moved house			not available
did not move house			not available
totals	not available	not available	2.6%

The sparse data is unfortunate but not surprising: we are looking at a very detailed level in this research. It is not possible to make further comparisons with the Anglican figures, since baptism will include any new converts and young adults, growing up in the church, who in Anglican terms are those who become old enough to join the Electoral Roll.

Table 2.19 Types of Membership Loss, KBA, 1980-90<sup>38</sup>

Type of loss	Number	Percentage
Death	1,327	23%
Transfer	1,674	29%
Erasure/withdrawal	2,771	48%
Total	5,772	100%

The average rate of transfers to other churches each year is therefore 29% of the total growth, which is 2.6% of the membership. It is not clear whether this is always transfers to other Baptist churches: I suspect it will include people transferring to other denominations in which case the table of types of transfer loss will look as follows:

Table 2.20 Types of transfer loss in KBA churches, 1980-90

	same denomination	changed denomination	totals
moved house			not available
did not move house			not available
totals	not available	not available	2.6%

<sup>38</sup> *ibid.* p.3, adapted from Table 7

There are small variations in the levels of transfers in and out between the 4 districts in the KBA but the data provided does not allow the analysis of variation done on the Rochester figures. It merely reminds us that this is an average and that individual churches in a given year can see much larger or smaller changes.

The data from this survey are included in the summary tables, 2.34 and 2.35.

## 2.4 Movement in the Christian Brethren, 1986-8

In 1988 a postal survey was undertaken of Christian (Open) Brethren churches in the UK.<sup>39</sup> All the churches or assemblies, their more traditional self-designation, on the 1983 address list were sent a copy of the questionnaire. 308 replied, a response rate of about 20%. This is even lower than their response rate of 38% in 1989 for the English Church Census.<sup>40</sup> These response rates imply a degree of caution about interpreting the results, since they are not from a selected representative sample. Nonetheless, the answers do provide another point of comparison from a reasonable number of churches.

Questions were asked about changes in membership over the previous two years. For comparison the percentages given in the report were re-calculated as annualised rates.

There was a net growth of just over 1%, which was comprised of 9% gains and 8% losses. The tables that follow are adapted from Appendix 3 of the report.<sup>41</sup> The percentages are based on the median size congregation, which was 47 (the mean was 52). The numbers are reproduced as a reminder of the relatively small numbers often encountered in church life of many denominations. It is worth noting that the Christian Brethren have consistently had a lower average congregational size than other Protestant denominations in the UK, at least between 1970 and 1990.<sup>42</sup>

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<sup>39</sup> P. Brierley et al. *The Christian Brethren*

<sup>40</sup> Brierley *'Christian' England*, p.44

<sup>41</sup> *ibid.*, p.102

<sup>42</sup> *ibid.*, pp.72-3 Table 20 gives 6 dates in the period 1970-90 for which this is the case

### 2.4.1 Gains in membership

Table 2.21 Gains in Christian Brethren churches, 1986-8

	Average number	% of growth	% of total congregation
Local transfer	0.9	20	1.8
Distant transfer	1.4	33	3.0
Child of members	0.6	13	1.2
Youth convert (under 20)	0.7	15	1.4
Adult convert	0.8	20	1.8
Total gains	4.3	100	9.1

There is no category for restoration or renewal of faith which may mean that the transfer growth rate and conversion growth rate are somewhat higher than in other surveys. This was also the case with the surveys of Anglican dioceses, discussed in sections 2.1 and 2.2, though they included a category for 'other reasons'. The conversion rate (35%) is similar to that in the Rochester surveys and slightly higher than in the St Albans survey, and represents a slightly higher proportion of the membership because the percentage of gains is higher.

The transfer rates are somewhat higher, though the Brethren survey did not have the option of 'Other reasons'. The questions asked did not enquire about change in denomination and for both transfer growth and transfer losses it looks as though this survey distinguished between those who moved house and those who did not. Given the relatively small number of congregations across the country it is likely that those transferring without moving house will have changed denomination. This results in the following table for transfer growth:

Table 2.22 Types of transfer growth, Christian Brethren, 1986-8

	same denomination	changed denomination	totals
moved house			3.0%
did not move house	?0%	?1.8%	1.8%
totals	not available	not available	4.8%

### 2.4.2 Losses in membership

Table 2.23 Losses of membership, Christian Brethren, 1986-8

Type of loss	Average number	% of losses	% of total congregation
Local transfer	1.1	28	2.2
Distant transfer	1.5	39	3.1
Died	0.8	22	1.7
Other Reasons	0.5	14	1.0
Total losses	3.7	100	7.9

In this survey loss of faith or commitment was not included as a possible response and that is probably why the percentage of 'other reasons' is relatively high. In comparison to the Anglican figures there is a lower number of deaths. The number of local transfers is much higher than in the Anglican cases and significantly higher than the AOG numbers, as will be seen in chapter 3, section 3.2.3. The Christian Brethren churches would appear to have a serious problem with people leaving them to join other local churches. This is shown up in the grid for types of transfer loss:

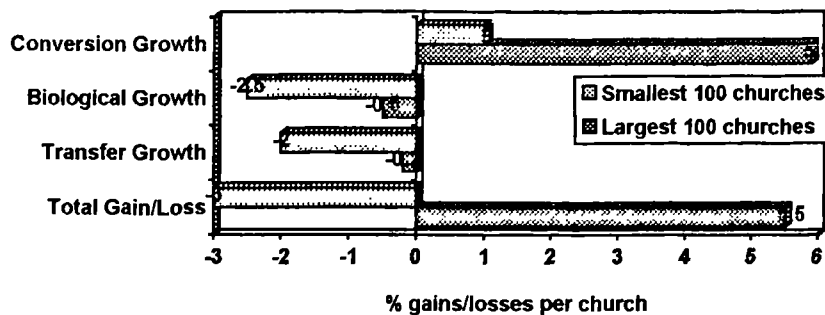
Table 2.24 Types of transfer loss, Christian Brethren, 1986-8

	same denomination	changed denomination	totals
moved house			3.1%
did not move house	?0%	?2.2%	2.2%
totals	not available	not available	5.3%

### 2.4.3 Variations between the assemblies

The above figures are calculated from all the churches in the sample. There are also some figures provided for the largest 100 churches compared with the smallest 100, and for the 100 fastest growing churches compared with the 100 fastest declining churches. These figures are not given in the same detail as those above but there are some interesting features which can be brought out.

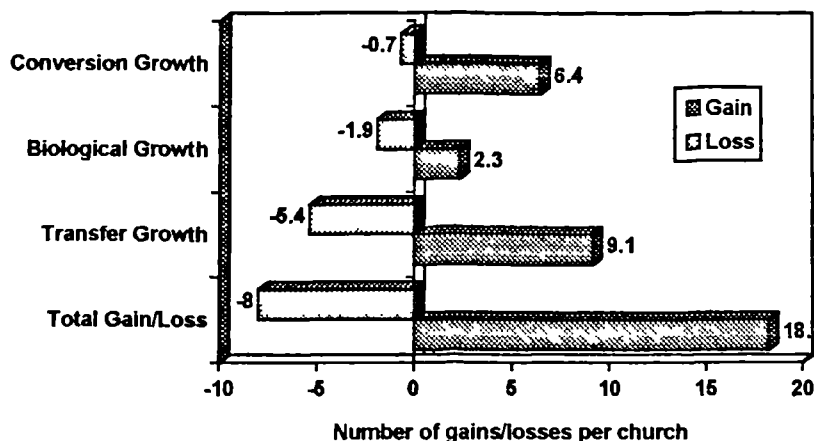
Figure 2.1 Assembly Change by reason and size of church, Christian Brethren, 1986-8



The above graph<sup>43</sup> gives percentage changes over a 2 year period. It indicates that it was the larger churches which were growing while the smaller ones were declining. When it is realised that the smallest 100 churches have less than 30 members<sup>44</sup> the percentage loss translates to 1 person per church on average. Unfortunately the figures for each category are only given as net figures, e.g. transfers in less transfers out. For the largest churches (which will have 60 or more members) their net growth is coming from conversions, with transfers in balancing transfer losses.

More detail is also given about the fastest growing and fastest declining churches.<sup>45</sup>

Figure 2.2 Assembly Change by reason for the 100 fastest growing churches, Christian Brethren, 1986-8



The numbers in this chart are not percentages but actual numbers of individuals joining or leaving. It enables us to calculate the proportions of different reasons for joining or

<sup>43</sup> *ibid.*, p.17

<sup>44</sup> *ibid.*, p.10 Table 2 gives a cumulative of 36% for assembly size 0-29. 36% of 308 is 111.



leaving and compare the results with the overall results in tables 2.21 and 2.23 , and with the results for the fastest declining churches below. The numbers in tables 2.25-28 have been calculated on an annual basis.

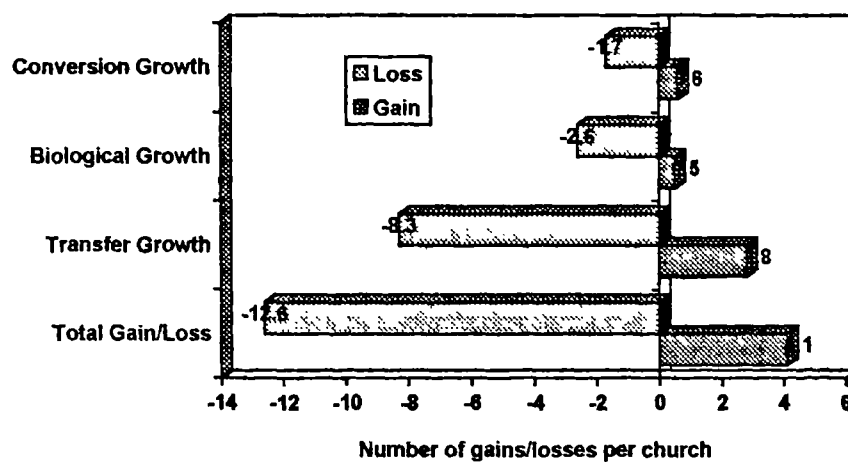
Table 2.25 Gains in the 100 fastest growing Christian Brethren churches, 1986-8

Type of gains	Average number	% of growth
Transfer growth	4.6	50
Child of members	1.2	13
Conversion	3.2	35
Total gains	9.1	100

Table 2.26 Losses in the 100 fastest growing Christian Brethren, 1986-8

	Average number	% of losses
Transfers out	2.7	68
Died	1.0	24
Other Reasons	0.4	9
Total losses	4.0	100

**Figure 2.3 Assembly Change by reason for the 100 fastest declining churches, Christian Brethren, 1986-8**



From these results we can calculate the following tables:

Table 2.27 Gains in the 100 fastest declining Christian Brethren churches, 1986-8

	Average number	% of growth
Transfer growth	1.4	68
Child of members	0.3	12
Conversion	0.3	15
Total gains	2.1	100

Table 2.28 Losses in the 100 fastest declining Christian Brethren, 1986-8

	Average number	% of losses
Transfers out	4.2	66
Died	1.3	21
Other Reasons	0.9	13
Total losses	6.3	100

Putting tables 2.21, 23, 25, 26, 27 and 28 together enables us to see the similarities and differences between the growing and declining churches:

Table 2.29 Comparisons of types of growth, growing and declining churches, Christian Brethren, 1986-8

Percentages of total growth	all churches	fastest growing	fastest declining
Transfer growth	53	50	68
Child of members	13	13	12
Conversion	35	35	15
Total gains	100	100	100

Table 2.30 Comparisons of types of losses, growing and declining churches, Christian Brethren, 1986-8

Percentages	all churches	fastest growing	fastest declining
Transfer loss	67	68	66
Deaths	22	24	21
Other reasons	14	9	13
Total losses	100	100	100

It is not possible to calculate these figures as a percentage of congregation size as these are not provided in the report.

This comparison shows that there is little difference in the profile of growing and declining churches with regard to their membership losses. However, we find a definite difference in the types of membership gain between the growing and declining churches.

In the growing churches there is a much higher proportion of conversions than generally across the denomination and correspondingly a slightly lower number of gains by transfer. It is the declining churches which have the higher transfer growth rates and a lower proportion of converts. This finding shows that criticism of growing churches in this survey for growing disproportionately at the expense of other churches is not well-founded. This also highlights the need to examine this profile in other denominations and particularly in church plants which have high rates of growth.

## 2.5 Changes of membership in the Baptist Union, England and Wales, in the 1970's

This section makes use of unpublished reports supplied by Paul Beasley-Murray.

### 2.5.1 The Beasley-Murray/Wilkinson survey

The survey was intended to assess empirically the validity of the '7 Vital Signs of Church Growth' proposed by Peter Wagner.<sup>46</sup> This led to an unusual method of presenting the results (though interesting in terms of the intended assessment) and as published are of

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<sup>46</sup> P. Beasley-Murray and A. Wilkinson *Turning the Tide*, p.20

little use for the purposes of this paper. Contact with Beasley-Murray ascertained that the original questionnaires no longer existed but that there was an earlier unpublished paper which contained additional information. The unpublished paper does not have page numbers so further references can not be given. Where possible, references are given to *Turning the Tide*, though some of the extra detail is in the unpublished paper.

The churches were selected in two ways: firstly, Baptist Union Area Superintendents were asked to supply the names of churches which they believed to be growing numerically. This provided just over 100 names and all were included in the survey. Secondly, from the other 1700 Baptist Union churches those with over 50 members were selected (this was for reasons to do with the testing of the church growth signs). Every other one of these was then chosen and the total sample of 565 churches arrived at. These churches were sent a detailed postal questionnaire and 330 returned it (58.4%). Both the mailing list and the responding churches covered all areas of England.<sup>47</sup>

As far as possible the figures from the survey are put into the same format as used in the previous sections of this chapter.

The average size of churches in 1978 was 132 but there are no figures for growth and decline or total movement. There is some breakdown of types of growth, though the classifications are not always clear.

In enquiring about conversion two questions were asked: in Section E Question 11 read: "How many people in the last five years have been won for Christ?"<sup>48</sup> A number of possible routes in to church membership was given. The average was 12.8 people per church over the five year period. For growing churches it was 16.2. Taking the total membership as 42,630, the overall figure for conversion growth annually is 2.0%.

Churches with different patterns of growth trends over a ten year period were distinguished but on average had similar conversion rates; the static and declining churches had lower rates. In each category there was a wide variation of conversion rate.

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<sup>47</sup> *ibid.*, p.21f and Appendix 3, p.110

<sup>48</sup> *ibid.*, p.107

The fact that the conversion rate was fairly similar for different patterns of growth suggested to the authors that the overall growth was significantly dependent on transfer growth. This they sought to pick up with a second question classifying those joining and leaving in a similar manner to the Kent survey already discussed.<sup>49</sup> In their analysis of this question they have assumed that those baptised and making a profession of faith have been converted: there are no categories for biological growth or restoration growth.

No overall results are given but it is possible to work out a transfer growth rate for churches with different growth patterns<sup>50</sup>. As in the case of the Kent Baptists it has to be assumed that these are transfers from all denominations.

Table 2.31 Transfer growth rates for different growth patterns, Baptist Union (B-MW)

Growth pattern	Accelerating growth	Steady growth	Decelerating growth	Growth at 5 or 2 years ago	Static or declining
Transfer growth rate	37.1%	45.3%	36.3%	39.8%	40.1%

Because the average size of churches in each category is not given, this table can not be compared with the conversion rate calculated.

What the figures do suggest is that a fairly similar proportion of growth was by transfer in all categories of church, though slightly higher in those churches with steady growth over this period. About 40% of the churches in the survey were in the static or declining category and another 15% in the category where growth 'began' 2 years ago so a transfer growth rate overall of 40% seems a reasonable estimate from this survey.

Net figures for gains and losses by transfer and other means of growth are given in the unpublished report. These confirm the existence of very wide variations between churches in these matters, including within the categories describing different growth patterns. Unfortunately they do not allow for more precise numerical comparisons to be made.

<sup>49</sup> *ibid.*, p.109

<sup>50</sup> *ibid.*, p.24 describes these patterns more fully

### 2.5.2 Baptist Union Survey, 1978

As part of an enquiry<sup>51</sup> into the self-perceived decline of the numbers in the Baptist Union a survey was held in 1978, very soon after the Beasley-Murray/Wilkinson survey discussed in section 2.5.1. References are given to the section numbers of the report.

The questionnaire was sent to 205 churches selected by the Area Superintendents. 160 replied, though the results were based on the first 100 replying. The group did not know if they had a representative sample. (Sections 1.1-3) One difference to the B-MW survey was the inclusion of churches with less than 50 members: there were 16 in this survey. (Section 2.1)

The total membership of the surveyed churches in 1968 was 13,673, in 1973 it was 12,363 and in 1978 it was 11,735. (Sections 2.2.3,6) The disproportionate number of women and the elderly was noted.

The gains and losses during that period are summarised in table 2.32 that follows. (Sections 2.2.7-11). Note that the difference in gains and losses is 690 even though it is stated elsewhere (2.2.3) that the overall loss was 628 in this period. The difference this makes to the membership figure is about 0.5%.

Table 2.32 Gains and losses in Baptist Union, 1973-78

	Number	% of growth	% of 1973 membership per year
<b>Gains</b>			
Baptism	1,719	46	2.8
Profession	501	14	0.8
Transfer	1,425	38	2.3
Restoration	65	2	0.1
<b>Totals</b>	<b>3,710</b>	<b>100</b>	<b>6.0</b>

<sup>51</sup> *Report of the Denominational Enquiry Group (DEG)*, p.1 sets out the terms of reference of the group

Losses	Number	% of losses	% of 1973 membership per year
Transfer	1,549	35	2.5
Death	1,222	28	2.0
Removal or resignation	1,629	37	2.6
<b>Totals</b>	<b>4,400</b>	<b>100</b>	<b>7.1</b>

In this survey we see the inclusion of restoration growth, though it was a small number (less than 2% of the total growth). Otherwise the proportions of gains seems similar to those found by the B-MW survey. Concern was expressed by the DEG (2.2.12) about the extent of nominal membership on some of the rolls: if this is so then the percentages expressed as a proportion of membership should be higher. However, comparison with the previous surveys discussed suggests that the figures are not untypical.

It should also be noted that strict annual rates have not been given since no account has been taken of the decline over this period. Again the difference is small: for example the percentage of gains based on the 1978 membership would be 6.3% (cf. 6.0% above), and the percentage losses would be 7.4% (cf. 7.1%). The true figures will lie between the two.

As with the previous surveys discussed, the figures are included in the summary tables, 2.34 and 2.35, and comparisons made.

## 2.6 Comparisons and Conclusions

### 2.6.1 Compilation of statistics of growth and losses

The key results from the above analyses are now brought together so that comparisons can be made and some tentative guidelines drawn up. The following table does not contain new figures but is a compilation of the foregoing work.

Table 2.33 Movement annually of church members in the surveys used in chap. 2

Denomination	Area	Survey Date	Abbrev- iation	Joiners	Leavers	Total Movement
% of membership						
Anglican	Rochester	1991-2	R 92	7	6	13
Anglican	Rochester	1992-3	R 93	6½	5½	12
Anglican	St Albans	1991-2	A 92	6½	4½	11
Baptist	Kent	1980-90	KB 90	9	8	17
Brethren	UK	1986-8	CB 88	9	8	17
Baptist	England	1968-78	B-MW	-	-	-
Baptist	Eng./Wales	1968-78	BU 78	6	7	13

It must be remembered that the definition of membership varies between denominations. However, it is not clear how or if those variations affect the **rate of change** of membership, which is what table 2.33 records. It is possible that the implied greater stability of Anglican congregations compared with Free Church congregations is a real phenomenon, since the BU 78 figure is thought to be something of an underestimate. It does also relate to a different period of time to the other surveys.

The details of gains and losses are brought together in the following two summary tables. Again, the figures are mainly those already given as each report was discussed, with the addition of proportions of the total membership where not previously calculated. A few minor alterations have been made to enable more direct comparisons to be drawn. These are noted in the detailed discussion that follows the tables.



Table 2.34 Profiles of growth in the surveys in chapter 2

Survey	Proportion of total growth %						Proportion of total membership %										
	Transfer growth			Cg	Bg	Rg	Other	Transfer growth						Conversion/ Restoration		Bg	Rg
	same denom	change denom	total Tg					same denom	change denom	total Tg	Inter-quartile range		mean	I-q. range			
R 92	29	6	35	34	10	-	21	2.1	0.4	2.5	1.3-2.3	0.1-0.5	2.5	1.3-3.0	0.7	-	1.5
R 93	28	7	35	36	8	-	21	1.8	0.5	2.3	0.9-2.0	0.1-0.6	2.4	1.4-2.7	0.5	-	1.4
A 92	42	7	49	29	10	-	12	2.8	0.5	3.3	2.3-3.5	0.3-0.5	1.9	1.2-2.8	0.7	-	0.8
KB 90	-	-	28	39		33	-	-	-	2.6	-	-	?2.7	-	?0.9	3.1	-
CB 88	-	-	53	35	13	-	-	-	-	4.8	-	-	3.2	-	1.2	-	-
B-MW	-	-	40	60			-	-	-	-	-	-	2.0	-	-	-	-
BU 78	-	-	38	46	16	-	-	-	-	2.3	-	-	?2.0	-	?0.8	0.9	-

Abbreviations: Tg = Transfer growth Cg = Conversion growth Bg = Biological growth Rg = Restoration or renewal growth.

In the R 92, R 93 and A 92 surveys, restorations and conversions were not distinguished, and are here recorded in the Cg column.

Table 2.35 Profiles of losses in the surveys in chapter 2

Survey	Proportion of total loss					Proportion of total membership							
	Transfer loss (t.l.)			Deaths	Lapsed	Other	Transfer loss				Deaths	Lapsed	Other
	area move	church move	total t.l.				area move	church move	total t.l.	Inter-quartile range area      church			
R 92	45	9	54	29	10	7	2.5	0.5	3.0	1.8-3.0      0.2-0.8	1.7	0.6	0.4
R 93	43	11	54	25	16	5	2.4	0.6	3.0	1.7-2.6      0.2-0.7	1.4	0.9	0.3
A 92	47	6	53	37	8	2	2.2	0.3	2.5	1.7-2.9      0.0-0.3	1.7	0.4	0.1
KB 90	-	-	29	23	48		-	-	2.6	-      -	2.1	4.3	
CB 88	39	28	67	22	-	14	3.1	2.2	5.3	-      -	1.7	-	1.0
BU 78	-	-	35	28	37		-	-	2.5	-      -	2.0	2.6	

### 2.6.2 Describing the categories and derivation of the statistics

The standard terms of the CGM are used here, and the way in which each survey interpreted the terms is noted. The variation between the surveys again indicates the practical difficulties in using the original CGM definitions of church growth and losses.

**Transfer growth** is measured in each of the surveys, but there are some differences. In the Anglican survey those transferring from other Anglican churches are distinguished from those moving from non-Anglican churches; the figures are straightforwardly recorded. In the Baptist surveys the single word 'transfer' is used; this has been taken to mean from any church<sup>52</sup> though there is some doubt about that, discussed in the following section 2.6.3. The Brethren survey distinguished between local and distant transfers; the table records the total percentage of transfers.

**Conversion growth** has been measured as the number of new people coming into the church from a non-church background (plus children of non-members in the case of R93) from the Anglican surveys. It is possible that some of these are more accurately described as restoration or renewal of faith, on the basis of the work by Finney.<sup>53</sup> No attempt was made to distinguish conversions from restoration or renewal of faith in these surveys. The mean rate of conversions in the R 93 survey includes the children of non-members (an extra 0.1%).

The Kent Baptist figure of 39% conversion growth is for baptisms, which will include children of members who become old enough to be baptised themselves. Hence, to be comparable, the total of 39% must be regarded as the sum of conversion growth and biological growth. The percentage figure of 2.7% of the congregation was gained through conversion annually is given a question mark because 10% biological growth has been assumed to be included in the baptism figure. The Brethren survey distinguished between youth (aged under 20) and adult converts; these are added to give one overall figure for the number of conversions.

**Restoration growth** is commonly referred to in books on church growth but only the Baptist surveys sought to measure it. Their term was testimony/renewal, and it probably includes people who would be regarded as transferring in the other surveys or even as converts. In the BU 78 survey professions of faith have been added to those explicitly called restoration.

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<sup>52</sup> see the comments in section 2.3

<sup>53</sup> Finney, *op. cit.*, p.22f

**Transfer loss** is split into those who move area and those who move church without moving area by the Anglican surveys and the Brethren one. The Baptist surveys quote 'transfers' and probably refer to those definitely joining another church, whether locally or further away.

The number of **deaths** is straightforwardly recorded in each survey.

The term **lapsed** is not used in any of the surveys but is the church growth concept behind the rather inelegant 'loss of faith/commitment/involvement' in the Anglican reports. In the Kent Baptist report 48% are said to be lost through 'erasure/withdrawal': this has been put across the lapsed and 'other reasons' categories since people will withdraw or be erased for many different reasons. It is probable that it includes some who are transfer losses because they move area, but don't join another church.<sup>54</sup> The Brethren survey does not have a category for lapsed but such losses are probably included in the 'other reasons' category.

### 2.6.3 Comparison of rates of growth

**Transfer growth** rates reported in the surveys vary considerably, though the Baptist figure is probably understated, by comparison with the other surveys: they have probably included some as renewals who would have been transfers in the other surveys. The fact that the Brethren figure is high suggests they are not regarding as converts all those who come from other churches. The Anglican figures for those changing denomination are all very similar, even though Anglican transfers varied considerably between the two dioceses.

Comparison of these figures with movement in the general population is placed after the discussion of transfer loss rates to avoid duplication.

The **conversion growth** rates are remarkably alike at about 1 in 3 of the total growth, especially when the biological growth in the Baptist baptism figure is allowed for. However, the IQR calculation shows there is considerable variation between Anglican deaneries and therefore even more so between congregations: it will clearly not be unusual to find differences of a factor of 3 in this rate, even between deaneries. There is the tantalising hint in the Brethren survey that the fastest declining churches have a much lower conversion rate than the other congregations.

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<sup>54</sup> It is the same issue at the other end as distinguishing between transfer in after a gap in church attendance and restoration.

Some support for this possibility comes from a study of the fastest growing churches in the Southern Baptist Churches in the USA during the 1970's: the average rate of baptisms per year was 5% of the membership in 1900, by 1976 it was 3.0%. This was regarded as little more than baptizing their own children. However, the 15 fastest growing churches had an average baptism rate of 11%.<sup>55</sup> Though allowance should be made for the re-baptism of those baptised as infants this suggests a strong connection between the conversion rate and growth: it was not simply transfer growth. Perhaps future surveys may be able to check this possibility more thoroughly.

The comparison of the rates of **biological growth** shows the usefulness of calculating the rate as a proportion of the total membership as well as of the total growth. The Anglican and Brethren experience does not look vastly different when expressed as a percentage of total growth, 8%, two 10's and 13%, a factor of 1.6 between the highest and lowest. However, as percentages of the total membership the factor between highest and lowest is a more substantial 2.25<sup>56</sup>. The Brethren would seem to be considerably better than the Anglicans at retaining youngsters.

These rates can be compared with general birth rates in the UK population.<sup>57</sup> In 1961 the birth rate as a percentage of the whole population was 1.79%, by 1971 it was 1.61%. From 1981 to 1992 it has fluctuated between 1.30 and 1.37. The 1988 Brethren survey most nearly relates to the 1971 figure: their biological growth rate of 1.2 is 27% below the birth rate then.

The Anglican surveys were undertaken in 1992 and 1993; since one is eligible to join the Electoral Roll at 16 years old the relevant birth rates are those for 1976 and 1977. The table referred to does not give figures for those years but does provide figures for the South East of England, excluding Greater London; this region includes the two dioceses surveyed above and the diocese of Chelmsford. The birth rate was 1.56 in 1961, 1.49 in 1971 and 1.26 in 1981. As has happened across the UK the rates for 1991 and 1993 have increased slightly from the 1981 figure. Assuming a linear decline in the birth rate the figure for 1976-7 would be about 1.37%. On this basis the biological growth rates in Rochester and St Albans in 1992 are about 47% and 51% respectively below the birth rate; in 1993 in Rochester it was 62% below the

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<sup>55</sup> Home Missions December 1977, p.6

<sup>56</sup> As with the birth rate calculations below, this has been worked out with percentage figures to 2 decimal places and then rounded off.

<sup>57</sup> All birth rate figures from *Regional Trends* 29, Table 3.9, p.44

birth rate. This again highlights the enormous 'leakage' of young people from the Church of England.<sup>58</sup>

These rates can be compared with the findings from London Baptist churches referred to in chapter 1, section 1.1.2.<sup>59</sup> The survey form distinguished between seven categories of parental involvement, repeated below for convenience. Responses from 21 churches were obtained and banded into 3 groups on the basis of their 1990 membership. The table 2.36 records the number of baptisms in each category for 1986-90:

Table 2.36 Baptisms of Young People, Baptist churches in London, 1986-90

	Members								Totals
	in 1990	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	
Group I	636	27	7	8	4	0	11	6	63
Group II	1,245	48	10	5	2	1	17	4	87
Group III	2,576	54	11	12	24	7	58	19	185
Totals	4,457	129	28	25	30	8	86	29	335

Group I churches had fewer than 150 members, Group II between 151-200, and Group III between 201-500 in 1990.

The seven types of parental involvement were:

1. both parents members
2. one parent a member
3. neither parents members but one/both regular attenders
4. parents active in another church
5. one parent active in another church
6. no previous meaningful connection with any church
7. meaningful previous connection with another church

Taking categories 1-5 as biological growth gives an average rate of 0.99% biological growth per year, with the smaller churches apparently more effective at retaining their teenagers with a rate of 1.45% and the largest churches least effective, with a rate of 0.84%. Since the vast

<sup>58</sup> See, for example, *Brierley Reaching and Keeping Teenagers* chapter 3, which reveals a general large drop in teenage church attendance. The evidence suggests that Anglican churches are retaining teenagers much less effectively than Roman Catholic or Independent churches, pp.95-100.

majority of the young people in the survey were aged between 14 and 20<sup>60</sup> their birth dates span 1966-1976. The birth rate for Greater London in 1971 was 1.52%.<sup>61</sup>

On this basis it suggests that the smaller churches were retaining young people fairly effectively, though the overall biological growth rate of the surveyed churches was about 35% below the birth rate. However, this can not be extrapolated to all Baptist churches in London since only those known to have at least 20 Young People attached were included: this was only 65 out of 333.

The survey does not allow us to make comparisons for conversion or transfer growth because of the limited age group involved. The main conclusion is that biological growth is much more significant than conversion growth of young people in the surveyed churches, on average 0.99% compared with 0.50% per year.

It is not possible to compare rates of **restoration growth**. The size of the 'other' category in the Anglican surveys may indicate an unwillingness to be too rigid in classifying individual's spiritual journeys and is also perhaps a recognition of the difficulties in making such distinctions in many cases.

#### 2.6.4 Comparison of rates of losses

Rates of **transfer loss** are higher than rates of transfer growth except in the case of the St Albans survey. This is to be expected: there is generally a loss of members when they move.<sup>62</sup>

Indeed, rates of 3% transfer loss or a little less have been used in an impressive piece of predictive work on the Methodist Manchester District in 1967 by John Butler and Bernard Jones.<sup>63</sup> Their prediction for 1986, a 20 year forecast, was out by less than 0.4%. One of their key assumptions was that 3% of the members, aged 21-60, would cease attending each year, mainly through transfer away. This, with their other reasonable and accurate assumptions, led to a prediction of gradual but remorseless decline. One difference found in the surveys

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<sup>59</sup> Beasley-Murray "A Godly Upbringing" *op. cit.*

<sup>60</sup> only 3 were aged under 12 and 15 aged 12 or 13, *ibid.*, p.6

<sup>61</sup> *Regional Trends* 29 Table 3.9, p.44

<sup>62</sup> For example, Gill *Myth of the Empty Church*, p.213 quoted a Methodist questionnaire: nearly one third of 357 people surveyed had let their membership lapse on moving to a new area.

<sup>63</sup> This was never published but is cited in Gill *op. cit.*, p.213f with details of the predictions and the subsequent outcomes.

discussed in this chapter is that the rate of gaining new members, through transfer growth or conversion, is generally higher than assumed in the Butler-Jones predictions.

In the USA it was found that residential movement was generally associated with lower rates of church attendance, though it was possible that those attending churches were less likely to move in the first place.<sup>64</sup>

The rates of transfer growth and loss found in this research can be compared with rates of movement in the general population. The following figures are taken from the national and county reports of the 1991 Census.<sup>65</sup> They are derived from the responses of people who had a different address one year prior to the Census date. The columns from "within district" onwards do not include the previous columns: strictly the heading is "between wards but within the district" etc. Population figures for Great Britain are in thousands, with the percentages moving calculated on the actual numbers.

Table 2.37 Population movement, 1990-1, 1991 GB Census

	Total population	Number moving	within ward	within district	within county	within region	between regions	outside GB
GB	54,156	5,350	1,300	1,895	647	543	629	337
%	-	9.87	2.40	3.50	1.19	1.00	1.16	0.62
Beds.	514,399	55,811	14,011	19,605	4,447	8,140	5,771	3,834
%	-	10.85	2.72	3.81	0.86	1.58	1.12	0.75
Herts.	960,564	93,157	16,138	31,667	11,171	20,017	8,451	5,713
%	-	9.70	1.68	3.30	1.16	2.08	0.88	0.59
Kent	1,493,891	144,057	26,061	56,776	23,439	19,811	9,681	8,289
%	-	9.64	1.74	3.80	1.57	1.33	0.65	0.55

These figures give us a comparison for the church surveys, though it must be noted that:

1. the survey years are not exactly the same: movement in the late 1980's was probably higher than these figures, in the early 1990's a little lower

<sup>64</sup> Robert Wuthnow and Kevin Christiano "The Effects of Residential Migration on Church Attendance in the United States"

<sup>65</sup> In each case the figures are to be found in Table 15, Part 1 of the relevant reports: the male and female figures given separately there, have been summed in table 2.37.



2. the Census data provides a comparison with transfer growth, not transfer loss: there are differences between inflows and outflows of population. The difference over any one year period is not easy to determine. According to re-registrations with NHS doctors<sup>66</sup> there was a marked net outflow from the South East region of England (which includes Bedfordshire, Hertfordshire and Kent) in 1991-2. 262,000 left the SE, while 225,000 moved in; these are respectively 1.48% and 1.27% of the 1991 SE population. It is the moving in figures which should be compared with the "between regions" column in Table 2.37. This net outflow was also found in 1989-90, with 1.42% leaving and 1.24% coming in.<sup>67</sup> However, Table 3.8 in *Regional Trends 27* indicates this loss was made up of a net loss from Greater London and a small net gain in the rest of the South East. At first sight the implication for this thesis is that transfer loss in the general population is a little lower in the SE (excluding Greater London) than transfer growth.

However, Table 2.37 also indicates the greater frequency of movement between SE counties compared with inter-county movement in other regions. This means that the inter-regional figures can not be used as a guide to the difference between inflow and outflow in smaller units.

The net result is that the Census migration figures (which are more precise than those calculated by NHS re-registrations) will have to be used for comparison with both transfer growth and transfer loss.

3. those moving within the same electoral ward are likely to remain members of the same church
4. those moving between wards within the same district may also easily remain in the same church: for comparison with transfer growth only half the percentage movement in this category is included
5. Bedfordshire and Hertfordshire are nearly coterminous with the diocese of St Albans<sup>68</sup>
6. the county of Kent is nearly coterminous with the area covered by the KBA<sup>69</sup>, while the diocese of Rochester is only part of the county

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<sup>66</sup> Inter-regional migration *Regional Trends 29*, Table 3.10, p.45

<sup>67</sup> Inter-regional migration *Regional Trends 27*, Table 3.7, p.39

<sup>68</sup> Brierley *Electoral Roll Change in St Albans*, p.7

<sup>69</sup> Brierley *Towards the Future*, p.7

## 7. the CB 88 survey includes churches in Northern Ireland

The net loss of members through the process of movement has been noted: what the figures on general population movement show is that church members are less likely to move house than is generally the case. This is partly because of the age structure of church membership: people in more elderly age groups are less likely to move but that does not account for all the difference.

A detailed comparison of the 1991 Census data on migration for Essex gave percentages of the population moving at different ages.<sup>70</sup> These were compared with the age structure of church membership in Essex in the 1989 Marc Europe survey.<sup>71</sup> The rate of movement in the general population was about 8.3%, for the church population it would have been 7.5%. For comparison with transfer growth rates these are altered on the basis of points 3 and 4 above to 5.3% and 4.6% respectively. This makes clear that church members are less likely to move than is generally the case.

In Kent the Census gives a comparative figure of 7.00% movement in any one year, with no adjustment made for the difference in age structure. Against this the total transfer growth was 2.5% and 2.3% in Rochester and 2.6% in the KBA. The rates of transfer loss were 3.0% for the diocese of Rochester (both years) and in the KBA was 2.6%: all these include those moving church and not moving house (Table 2.35 contains the relevant survey figures).

In Hertfordshire and Bedfordshire the comparative figure is 6.32% movement against transfer growth of 3.3% and transfer loss of 2.5% in the St Albans diocese. The higher rate of church membership growth does not seem to arise from a higher rate of movement in those counties compared with Kent. (The conclusion is tentative because of the different years being compared.) Indeed, this was the one survey where transfer growth as a proportion of the membership was higher than transfer loss: it would appear that there were more Anglicans moving into St Albans churches that year than might be generally the case.

The national rate of movement was somewhat lower at 5.32% after the allowance for local moves is made: this is comparable with the Brethren transfer growth rate of 4.8% and transfer

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<sup>70</sup> 1991 Census Essex Vol. 1, Tables 2 and 15

<sup>71</sup> Brierley *Prospects for the Nineties: South East (North)*, p.33

loss rate of 5.3%. However, only 3.0% of the growth (Table 2.21) and 3.1% of the losses (Table 2.23) came through distant transfer.

The BU 78 survey gave an overall transfer growth of 2.3% and transfer loss of 2.5%; these are presumably well below the general rate of movement in the population at that time.

From this mass of detail there are two points which seem clear:

1. transfer growth is usually less than transfer loss, and
2. transfer losses are fewer than migration in the general population would suggest.

The implication is that church members are less likely to move away from an area than other people. This is explicable on the grounds that they have a stronger than average commitment to the locality since English churches are mostly based geographically. This would appear to provide clear confirmation of Wuthnow and Christiano's speculation that religious participation does deter migration.

Rates of loss through deaths are higher than in the population as a whole, reflecting the older age structure of church membership. For example, 3 of the surveys reported a death rate of 1.7%, compared with all-age, UK rates of 1.14% in 1988 and 1.09% in 1992.<sup>72</sup> The Anglican rates can also be compared with the slightly lower regional death rates of 1.04% in 1992. The rate of 2.1% found in the Kent Baptists survey clearly reflects congregations weighted towards older age groups; this fact is made clearer by the percentage as a proportion the total membership. If it had been left as a proportion of the total loss it would have looked similar to the other surveys.

Those described in table 2.35 as **lapsed** are relatively few in the Anglican surveys and are likely to be few in the KBA survey too. In their case the number lost through transfer does look low and there are probably transfer losses concealed in the 'other' category.

### 2.6.5 Conclusions

From the material in this chapter I offer the following very imperfect guidelines, regarding them as a first approximation, to be improved by further research. The remarks are confined to Anglican and Baptist churches, for which some degree of comparison is possible.

In surveys in which ministers or other church leaders decided the categories of joiners and leavers, the following proportions were typically found.

**Growth:**

**transfer growth** was between 30%-50% of the growth per year

in the case of Anglican churches, typically just 7% of the growth was by transfer from another denomination

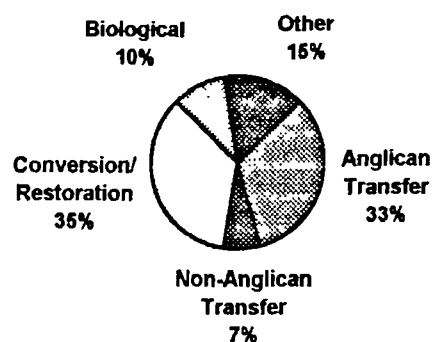
**conversion and restoration growth** were between 30% and 40% per year

**biological growth** was about 10% per year

Reflecting the inherent difficulties in deciding how individuals should be assigned to these categories the Anglican surveys found other reasons given frequently, in the case of Rochester as much as 20%, in St Albans it was 12%.

The chart in figure 2.4 illustrates the typical values of types of growth for Anglican churches surveyed, though as noted already, there will be wide variations between parishes, and for a given parish possibly between one year and the next.

**Fig 2.4 Notional proportions of types of growth**



**Losses:**

**transfer loss** was assessed rather differently in the Anglican and Baptist reports. In the case of the Anglicans it was between 50% and 55%, mostly because of a house move. The Baptist churches reported 30% - 35% transfer losses, typically.

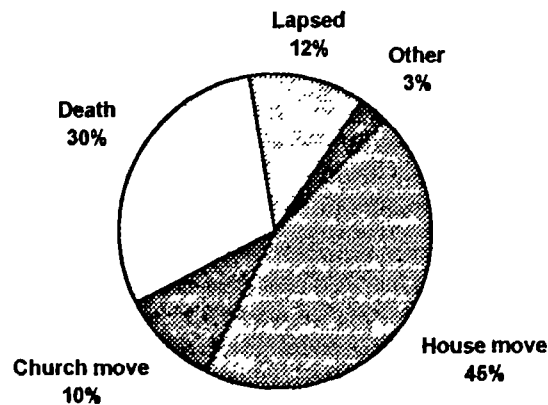
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<sup>72</sup> Death rates from *Social Trends 20 and 22* and *Regional Trends 29*

The proportion of loss through **deaths** varied considerably between 20% and 40%.

The rate of **lapsing** could only be directly assessed in the Anglican surveys and went from 8% to 16%.

**Fig 2.5 Notional proportions of types of losses**



When expressed as proportions of the total membership per year, the following figures are typical, mainly for Anglican churches.

#### **Growth:**

The proportion of people joining a congregation in a given year was about 7% of the Electoral Roll.

Rates of **transfer growth** between Anglican churches was likely to be in the range of 1-3%. Those changing denomination were between 0% and 1%. The total transfer loss in Baptist churches was similar. It is usually less than the rate of transfer loss.

**Conversion growth** was typically between 1% and 3%.

The rate of **biological growth** was typically between ½% and 1%, about half the birth rate.

#### **Losses:**

Typically about 5% left the Electoral Roll each year.

The rates of **transfer loss** through moving house was mainly in the range 1½% to 3%; through a local church move it was between 0% and 1%.

The **death rate** was higher than the national average (about 1.1%) at between 1½% and 2%, slightly higher in the case of the Baptist churches surveyed.

The number **lapsing** was hard to assess but will usually be less than 1%.

Applying these conclusions as a test of an individual church would need to be done over a considerable period of time: 10 years would give a reasonable amount of data. The extent to which these results can vary for one church is shown by the following illustration which applies the percentages to the average sized Anglican church of 77<sup>73</sup>; but it only requires one couple to move house, for example and the transfer loss rate changes dramatically.

In the 'average' Anglican church in a given year the Electoral Roll numbers will not change very much. However, some individuals will join and leave: 1 or 2 people may join from another Anglican church and there may be someone else from another denomination. Between 1 and 3 may leave through moving house and another may go to another local church. There could be up to 3 new people join the church from non-church backgrounds. Every other year a child of a member will probably join the Electoral Roll. On the other hand, 1 or 2 people are likely to die each year. Finally, there will be 1 or 2 joining and leaving for a variety of reasons, including renewed faith and loss of faith.

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<sup>73</sup> Brierley *Prospects for the Nineties*, p.17

## Chapter Three

### Growth rates calculated from previous church growth surveys:

### examples in which significant church planting occurred

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In this chapter and the next, the levels of types of growth, especially transfer growth, in church planting situations is examined and compared with the results of chapter 2. In this chapter large-scale surveys giving overall results are examined; the analysis of Pioneer data has not been previously published in any form. In the succeeding chapter two entirely new case studies of Anglican parishes are considered.

### 3.1 Transfer growth in church plants in an Administry survey

Figures on transfer growth in church planting can be found in research done by Administry. They surveyed 60 growing churches, mostly Anglican, in 1991. Of these churches, 34 had tried church planting and 22 a doubling up of services, including some which had tried both.<sup>1</sup> The survey was undertaken using a self-administered questionnaire. Churches were selected on the basis that they were growing numerically and therefore the survey can not be used as independent evidence of the usefulness of church planting as a means of church growth.

The questionnaire asked for an estimate of the ratio of transfer growth to other kinds of growth in the form x:y. A wide range of answers was given, from 0 to 3:1, i.e. 0% to 75% of growth was regarded as transfer growth. A conversation with John Truscott, the National Co-ordinator of Administry, revealed that he did not have great statistical confidence in these figures and they should only be regarded as the slightest of indications.

The report asked the reasons for transfers, and highlighted movement of individuals for changes of job etc. as more important than transfer from neighbouring congregations. This concurs with the results already discussed in chapter 2. It may also be compared with the observation made by Westwood on the migration factor in church-planting.<sup>2</sup>

The report on the survey stated that the self-perception of planting churches was that "they were not growing at the expense of other congregations. It seems that what they meant by this was that they were not growing at the expense of *one* other church."<sup>3</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> Administry *Get up and grow!*, p.1

<sup>2</sup> see chap.1, section 1.3

<sup>3</sup> *ibid.*, p.3 (my italics)

The other components of growth were not distinguished in this survey.

Perhaps the most useful result of this survey in regard to types of church growth is that it reinforces the need for accurate base-line figures and accurate investigation of church planting and other proposed methods of evangelism.

### 3.2 Movement in Assemblies of God congregations, 1991-3

There have been 2 recent reports on church-going in the Assemblies of God denomination (AOG) in the UK. They are summarised in the second report, made by the Christian Research Association.<sup>4</sup> The surveys and reports were intended to provide information on changes in churchgoing for the leadership of the denomination. It is helpful in the context of this thesis because an important emphasis of the AOG in this period has been church planting, and there is evidence of considerable growth in the number of congregations.

The survey was sent by AOG headquarters to all the 618 AOG churches on their list. The response rate in 1992 was 39%, in 1993 it was 27%.<sup>5</sup> These low response rates mean that the results must be regarded as somewhat tentative, including the growth claims. It is not unreasonable to suggest that churches growing in number are more likely to respond than those which are static or declining, especially since church growth was the specific focus of the research.

Provided the grossing up of figures across the whole denomination is treated cautiously, the survey provides evidence of how this proportion of churches was growing and can be compared with the results in chapter 2, from other denominations.

There is evidence of real growth in numbers: the list of AOG churches supporting the 1994 JIM (Jesus In Me) evangelistic campaign had a total of 665 churches. This is an increase of 7% on the 618 churches listed in the 1993 AOG directory. In addition, as Brierley puts it in his report *"the JIM list provides congregation details for 426 or 64% of these congregations. This is a broader (and therefore better) base from which to*

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<sup>4</sup> *Continuing to Grow!*

<sup>5</sup> *ibid.*, p.1 The response is stated as 28%, but this includes 3 blank forms and 5 from churches no longer operating as AOG; since these were largely treated as non-responding it seems more accurate to state the response as 167 churches, that is 27% of 618.

*estimate the total AOG congregation. The JIM total was 36,815, which when grossed up gives an estimate for all churches of 54,114.*<sup>6</sup>

In this consideration of the figures I shall not examine regional variations given in the report as the base is too small for confidence. I shall confine myself to the national figures, taking them as indications for comparison with other denominations.

### 3.2.1 Overall growth in numbers

The membership growth has been tabulated in table 3.1 from figures in the report. AOG churches do not have a consistent definition of church membership: where the local church did not have its own definition they were asked to record those "who regularly attend"<sup>7</sup>. It is from these figures that the number of church members has been calculated.

Table 3.1 Membership of AOG congregations, 1991-3

Year	1991	1992	1993
Church members	48,584	49,381	54,114
Percentage increase	n/a	1.6	9.6
Number of churches	n/a	622 <sup>8</sup>	665
Percentage increase	n/a	n/a	6.9

Taking these figures, there was very substantial growth in membership between 1992 and 1993. It is largely, but not entirely, accounted for by the increase in the number of congregations. There was a high commitment to church planting in the denomination: in 1992 34% of the responding churches were "planning to plant a church in the near future", in 1993 it was 22%.<sup>9</sup> This strong commitment to growth has borne fruit, though a longer time span is required to see how long it can be sustained.

Following the lead of the report, the subsequent analysis of joiners and leavers is confined to the actual numbers in the survey<sup>10</sup>, because of the low response rate.

<sup>6</sup> *ibid.*, p.1 for all details given so far

<sup>7</sup> *ibid.* Appendix containing a copy of the questionnaire

<sup>8</sup> This is the figure given on p.3 of the report. It is not known why it differs from the figure of 618 previously given.

<sup>9</sup> *ibid.*, p.16

<sup>10</sup> *ibid.*, p.5 onwards. Brierley uses the term 'sample' which may give a misleading suggestion of accuracy.

Table 3.2 Changes in membership, AOG, 1992-3

	1993		1992
		% change in membership	% change in membership
Gains	2,267	17½%	19%
Losses	929	7%	9%
Membership	14,251		12,913

The 1992 membership figure is calculated from the 1993 figure less the net gains. Table 3.2 reflects the relatively high turnover in membership in the AOG congregations: a change of 28% in 1992 and of 24½% in 1993, about twice the typical Anglican figure of 12-13% change.

(Note that the 1993 percentages are higher than those given in the report because they are of the 1992 membership, not the 1993. This is done so that comparison with the figures in chapter 2 can be made on the same basis and applies to all the percentages of membership that follow.) The make up of the gains and losses is discussed in the next two sub-sections.

### 3.2.2 Joining a congregation

From the question asking why people had joined the church the following table was produced:

Table 3.3 Reasons why people joined an Assemblies church, 1992-3<sup>11</sup>

	1992	1993
	%	%
New conversions joining the church	53	44
Transfer of commitment from a church of another denomination	26	30
Transfer of commitment from another Assembly of God	11	10
Children becoming old enough to join whose parents are members	4	7
A renewal of faith	2	7
Other reasons	4	2
Total numbers	3,656	2,267

<sup>11</sup> *ibid.*, p.7, taken from table 6 of the report

These figures imply that conversion growth is much more significant in AOG churches than in the Anglican ones studied. However, the definition of conversion used by individual AOG churches is not known, and it is possible that in other traditions more of those regarded here as converts would be seen as renewing their faith or even transferring from other churches.

The proportion of those transferring from another church is fairly similar to the Anglican churches but it is more likely to be from another denomination. Some of this will be due to moving house and perhaps leaving another smallish denomination not represented in the new locality. Unfortunately the figures do not show the extent of house movement.

A further comparison of types of growth on the basis of the proportion of the membership is also important.

Table 3.4 Types of transfer growth in AOG churches, 1992-3

	same denomination	changed denomination	totals
moved house			not available
did not move house			not available
totals	1.8%	5.3%	7.0%

The percentages in table 3.4 are of the membership. The equivalent Anglican figures were between 2 - 3% transferring within the denomination and less than 1% from other denominations.

It is clear that AOG churches have benefited by transfer growth from other denominations to a considerable extent: more than 1 in 20 of the total membership in 1993 had come from another denomination in the last year.

However, it should also be noted that the conversion growth rate was even higher: 997 church members were converts in 1992-3, 7.7% of the total 1992 membership. It is not known how converts were defined, but the high level of transfer growth does suggest that those called converts were not simply people transferring from other denominations and regarded as converts.

In section 3.2.3 it is shown that the AOG also lose a high number of people to other denominations.

### 3.2.3 Leaving the Assemblies of God

The question asking why people had left resulted in the following table:

Table 3.5 Reasons why people left an Assemblies church, 1992-3<sup>12</sup>

	1992	1993
	%	%
Transfer of membership to another denomination	30	33
Loss of faith/commitment/involvement	31	29
Transfer of membership to another AOG church	16	15
Death	15	13
Other reasons	8	10
Total numbers	1,656	959

In this table we see the high number of transfers out of AOG churches: Brierley's comment is: *"while this may partly be explained by people moving house and joining their nearest evangelical church rather than an AOG church, the percentage is too high for this to be the sole, or even majority, explanation."*<sup>13</sup> This is prima facie very plausible but when the transfer loss rates are expressed as a percentage of the total congregations they can be seen to be somewhat higher than the Anglican and Baptist rates but well below that of the Brethren:

Table 3.6 Types of transfer loss, AOG, 1992-3

	same denomination	changed denomination	totals
moved house			not available
did not move house			not available
totals	1.1%	2.4%	3.6%

These figures do suggest higher movement between local churches but this is difficult to quantify because no record was kept of those moving house. It should be noted that,

<sup>12</sup> *ibid.*, p.9, taken from table 8 of the report

while Anglicans can nearly always find another local Anglican church when they move, this is much harder for a member of the AOG: their total number of congregations throughout the UK is similar to the number of Anglican congregations in the diocese of Chelmsford alone, for example.

It is quite possible that the majority of those changing denomination have done so after a house move.

This point illustrates the lack of objective criteria in assessing transfer rates between churches. It shows the necessity of developing such criteria if truly useful comments are to be made. The current piece of research is intended to assist this process.

Of considerably more significance is the number of people losing faith or commitment: it is high as a proportion of all leavers and as a percentage of the congregations (2.2%). This is much higher than in the other surveys; the surveys of Anglican churches in chapter 2 were the only ones to specifically ask about loss of faith and figures of less than 1% were found in all three surveys.

The definitions of loss of faith/commitment/involvement were discussed above in chapter 2.1.2, and it was shown that generally loss of faith is not a major issue for people leaving churches. The relatively high proportion in the case of the AOG is perhaps the other side of the high 'conversion' rate. This will be so in at least two ways: one, the tendency to dramatise changes in spiritual journeys as conversion or lapsing, and two, the possibility of recent converts finding it difficult to integrate into a church fellowship.

The proportion of those dying was just under 1%, which is below the national mean death rate of 1.09% in 1992.<sup>14</sup> The report correctly notes that this reflects the younger age profile in the surveyed churches.

### 3.2.4 Conclusions

The benefit of the base-line figures calculated in chapter 2 is shown here by the ability to make better judgements about the types and levels of growth and losses. In addition to calculating the proportion of various types of growth, the importance of examining such

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<sup>13</sup> *ibid.*, p.9

figures as a proportion of the membership or regular attendance has also been shown. Without this latter calculation comparisons across churches and denominations are likely to be misleading.

Though the transfer growth rates are high by comparison with the Anglican figures there is evidence from the AOG that supports the finding from the fastest growing Brethren churches that high transfer growth rates are associated with high conversion growth rates (see table 2.29). The rapid growth of the AOG churches surveyed was not just transfer growth, though further evidence of the nature of conversions would be of interest.

Overall, the churches of this denominations show considerable fluidity, with high numbers transferring from other churches and joining as converts, and relatively high numbers lapsing too. However, it is difficult to argue that all those regarded as new converts were quickly lapsing: the converts were 7.7% of the membership, while 2.2% were lapsing.

As set out, the figures do not distinguish recent church plants from longer established congregations so the further step of assessing the value of church planting can not be taken.

### 3.3 Growth and Movement in the Pioneer network of churches

#### 3.3.1 Data Collection

The Pioneer network of house churches has grown through new churches joining the network and through an active programme of church planting. During this time they have kept relatively detailed records of their growth, summarised in table 3.7. The table has been compiled from figures kindly supplied by Richard Burt, who manages their database. He has indicated that there has been no previously published analysis of this data and so a short description of how the data is collected is included here.

The figures referred to are not of members but in the data collection form are called "new attenders". Richard Burt describes it in this way:

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<sup>14</sup> as noted in chapter 2



*"I have a feeling that leaders would declare the 'peak' figure that would occur fairly regularly (excluding special events), rather than keep track of those who fairly regularly attend. What we are finding is that attendance and membership are diverging with time, partly because the latter is not always well defined in some of our churches, but also because many are reporting a larger fringe of interested people that have not as yet made a commitment."*<sup>15</sup> This is shown in table 3.8.

This observation suggests that any attendance figures given by Pioneer churches are more nearly comparable to Anglican average returns than Electoral Roll totals, though possibly calculated in such a way which makes them higher than Anglican equivalents. There is one real difference: in Anglican churches it is usually, though not invariably, the case that the average Sunday attendance is lower than the Electoral Roll figure, in the case of Pioneer churches there are more attending than in formal membership.

### 3.3.2 Overall growth in numbers

The dramatic growth (from a low base) in membership and attendance at Pioneer churches from 1971 to 1994 is recorded in tables 3.7 and 3.8 that follow:

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<sup>15</sup> Private communication, 21st March 1994

Table 3.7 Pioneer Growth Summary 1976 to 1994

Gains				Losses														
Period	Conversions	Restorations	Children	Transfers			Total	Plant		Left	Deaths	Total						
				Church	Area Transfers	Total		Joined Church										
76-81	170	35%	60	12%	55	11%	175	36%	30	6%	490	0	0%	198	94%	12	6%	210
81-86	419	40%	98	9%	133	13%	243	23%	145	14%	1038	29	7%	373	92%	5	1%	407
86-91	1004	39%	262	10%	396	15%	478	19%	416	16%	2556	213	23%	703	74%	30	3%	946
91-93	574	42%	149	11%	115	8%	302	22%	243	18%	1383	234	38%	375	60%	12	2%	621
93-94	339	33%	82	8%	109	11%	280	27%	209	21%	1019	79	14%	479*	85%	8	1%	566
Total	2506	39%	651	10%	808	12%	1478	23%	1043	16%	6486	555	20%	2128	77%	67	2%	2750

\*The questionnaire sent to the Pioneer member churches in January 1994 asks for more detail of those leaving:

Church Transfers: 177    Fallen Away: 160    Moved: 142    Total: 479

Percentages are of total gains and losses

Definitions as given on the Pioneer Data Collection Form:

### Gains

- Conversions** New Christians who had no previous commitment to the Lord,  
including the children of these new Christians
- Restorations** New Attenders who had a previous commitment to the Lord but who  
had dropped out of Church life, including the children of these new attenders
- Children** Those born into the church only
- Church Transfers** Those who moved to your church from another local church,  
*or were part of a church plant team*, including the children of those transfers
- Area Transfers** Those who moved into the area and settled at your church,  
including the children of these transfers

### Losses

- Church Plants** Those who were purposely sent out of your congregation to  
join a church plant either at home or abroad
- Church Transfers** Those who moved from your church to another local church
- Fallen Away** Those who have left having fallen away from the faith
- Moved** Those who have moved out of the area and are not in any  
category above

Table 3.7 is set out in this way because of the format of the figures supplied. It is worth noting that as new churches join the network their statistics are added retrospectively to those already in the table. Thus in 1992 and 1993 a total of 11 churches joined, some of which pre-date the Pioneer network.<sup>16</sup> This means that the larger annual gains (and losses) are due in part to a larger base, caused by transfer growth of whole congregations!

Table 3.8 Pioneer Total Attendance, Membership and Congregations, 1971-94

Year	Attenders	% annual growth	Members	Congregations
1971	80	-	80	2
1972	88	10	88	2
1973	95	8	95	2

<sup>16</sup> *ibid.*

1974	103	8	103	2
1975	129	25	129	3
1976	145	19	145	3
1977	248	71	233	5
1978	305	23	270	5
1979	389	28	336	6
1980	528	36	463	8
1981	804	52	767	11
1982	912	13	881	11
1983	1,055	16	1,023	13
1984	1,309	24	1,262	15
1985	1,491	14	1,440	15
1986	1,841	23	1,753	18
1987	2,127	16	2,079	19
1988	2,399	13	2,381	21
1989	2,813	17	2,878	27
1990	3,204	14	3,160	32
1991	3,785	18	3,662	35
1992	4,055	7	3,765	40
1993	4,685	16	4,329	48
1994	5,328	14	4,527	52

Despite several requests for further information it was not possible to ascertain which congregations were church plants in each year, and which were transfers into the network. This has meant that the statistics were not quite as useful as had been hoped.

Comparing tables 3.7 and 3.8 shows that not all gains are accounted for: the total gain in attendance from 1976 to 1994 is  $5,328 - 145 = 5,183$ . Total gains minus losses over the same period is  $6,486 - 2,750 = 3,736$ , which is 72% of the increase in attendance. There are probably three reasons for this<sup>17</sup>:

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<sup>17</sup> That there is a problem is indicated by Burt's comment: "in 1991 50% state that their data is factual, 36% estimated and the rest guessed at. In 1993 these become 42.5% factual, 50% estimated and the rest guessed....I suspect that the above is based on guesswork itself!" *ibid.* My reasons suggest why this imprecision can occur.

1. it was found easier to assess why people had left in the Anglican surveys and the simple categories of this research make that even more true; to decide why someone has joined is not always so easy and as Finney's work has shown may be described differently by the person concerned and the church leader
2. as churches join the network their existing statistics may well not be as complete as the Pioneer form is looking for, and this is more the case for the gains
3. as the 'fringe' represented by the difference between attenders and members grows so leaders may be less confident of why people attend. However, even if gains minus losses is calculated as a percentage of the membership it is 85%.

This makes analysis of gains and losses as a percentage of the total attendance more difficult but as the following table shows there are two periods for which such an analysis is reasonable:

Table 3.9 Percentage growth accounted for by gains and losses, Pioneer, 1976-94<sup>18</sup>

Period	1976-81	1981-86	1986-91	1991-3	1993-4
% of growth	280/659 =	631/1037 =	1610/1944	762/900	453/643
accounted for	42%	61%	= 83%	= 85%	= 70%

For each period the gains minus the losses (table 3.7) are divided by the total gain in attenders (table 3.8). For 1986-91 and 1991-3 it is worthwhile regarding the breakdown of gains and losses as close to the full population. For the other periods the breakdown may be a reasonable sample, becoming less accurate as the percentage falls.

In the subsequent discussions of percentages of church attendance figures are multiplied by 1944/1610 for 1986-91, and by 900/726 for 1991-3, on the premise that gains and losses have been equally under-estimated. This is probably not exactly true for the reasons outlined above but it provides the best approximation available; it is because of this estimation process that the other periods are not considered in detail.

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<sup>18</sup> Burt, private communication, 31st October 1994

Because it is the only year with a detailed breakdown of losses, 1994 figures for losses have also been calculated by multiplying by 643/453; the lower confidence in these results is shown in the summary table 3.12 by printing them in italics.

The average growth ratio( $r$ ) for a period of  $n$  years, where the numbers are  $x$  at the beginning of the period and  $y$  at the end is given by:

$$r = (y/x)^{1/n}$$

Using this formula, the average annual net growth in 1986-91 was 15½% and in 1991-3 was 11%.

To calculate gains and losses during the periods the total attendance figures for each period were summed and the gains and losses calculated as percentages of these totals. Using this method results in the following estimates of annual rates of gains and losses: in 1986-91: average rate of gains 25%, and of losses 9%; in 1991-3 these were 21% and 9% respectively. Thus the rates of net growth, 14% and 12% respectively, are fairly accurately calculated by this route. The amount of movement is high, mainly because of the high rate of growth.

### 3.3.3 Gains in those attending

Overall, the gains recorded in table 3.7 show a reasonably similar pattern from 1971 to 1994. The main variation is in the proportions of church transfers and area transfers. It is likely that the high percentage of church transfers in 1976-81 reflects on the 'start-up' period for the new group of churches, with few area transfers occurring because the churches were not well known to people moving in. Many of the church transfers in 1986-91 and 1991-3 seem to be accounted for by the high level of church planting: if all leaving to church plant were immediately re-registered then 45% and 77% of the church transfers were of church planting team members in those periods. This may suggest a higher level of church transfers in 1994, unless this represents 'late' registrations of church planting teams.

The proportion of growth through area transfers (those moving house) has grown steadily, from 6% in 1976-81 to 21% in 1994, probably reflecting the increasing awareness of these churches amongst other Christians and also some movement of existing attenders. Over the whole period, transfer growth of both kinds is 39% of the total growth, a figure remarkably similar to that in the surveys in chapter 2.

However, the rates of transfer growth in 1986-91 and 1991-3 are high as a percentage of the total attendance: in the first period it is 8.7%, in the second 8.2%. If all those in church planting teams have been included then these figures are reduced to 6.6% and 4.7%, which are well above the surveys in chapter 2, though not the AOG rates.

Nearly half the gains of the Pioneer churches are described as conversions or restorations, a figure which is in line with the AOG data for 1992 and 1993. This has not varied very much for all the periods recorded in table 3.7, until the last year when conversions are down to 33% and restorations to 8%. These earlier rates are much higher than in the Anglican surveys where about one third of growth came from 'new people'.

In 1986-91 the proportion of new people was nearly 10% of the total attendance, and in 1991-3 8.6%. These rates are much higher than in the surveys of chapter 2. Although some of this may be the result of different perceptions of spiritual journeys by church leaders of different traditions it receives support from the work by Finney. In his survey he found that House Churches had 15 professions of faith per 100 attenders in the year of the survey, against a mean of 6.4. Indeed, the distribution was so skewed that every other denomination had less than the mean number of professions (the Anglican figure was 5.2).<sup>19</sup>

The category of biological growth is calculated in a different way to the other surveys since this is births rather than children growing into adult commitment. With the relatively small population size it is not surprising that there should be some fluctuation in the rates. In 1986-91 3.9% of the attenders were children born within the existing fellowship. In 1991-3 it was 1.7%. These are substantially higher than UK birth rates in the general population of those periods and reflects the young age structure of these churches.<sup>20</sup>

#### 3.3.4 Losses in those attending

It is unfortunate that relatively little detail is available on the types of losses from Pioneer churches: this situation should improve with the more detailed form adopted in 1994 as the time series is built up.

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<sup>19</sup> Finney, *op. cit.*, p.8, Fig. 7

<sup>20</sup> Figures supplied by Burt show church attenders 'over-represented' in age groups below 45 and 'under-represented' over that age. For example, in England in 1991 about 16% were aged over 65 in the general population, while only 3% of Pioneer attenders were in that age group. Burt, private communication, 21st March 1994.

The most obvious feature is the small number of deaths, because of the young age structure, already mentioned.

The other feature of note is the recording of church planting team members as losses and gains, showing the high rates of church planting since 1986. This led to a drop in the mean congregation size to below 100 in 1993 for the first time since 1985 (see table 3.8). This rose again in 1994, though, as previously noted, much of the growth came from transfer growth in that year.

In 1994 the proportions of losses because of church transfers and of those lapsing looked high at 31% and 28% of the total losses respectively. These are much higher than in the surveys of chapter 2, though not dissimilar to those of the AOG. This could have arisen because of the very low death rate, which was not true for the AOG and so figures were calculated as percentages of the total attendance as described in section 3.3.2.

This shows the Pioneer churches losing many people to other local churches, nearly as many as join from other local churches. The rate of 5.4% is very high. Even if every single loss has been recorded and only the gains have been under-estimated, 3.8% of the attenders would have moved to other local churches, a rate still much higher than in the other surveys discussed.

Similarly, the rate of those lapsing is very high at 4.3% on the adjusted figure or 3.0% if all losses are accounted for. These are very high rates of people lapsing, an observation which can be made with confidence on the basis of the figures collected and analysed in this thesis.

The rate of deaths is very low, between 0.2 and 0.3%, another reflection of the young age structure of the congregations in the Pioneer network.

### 3.4 Growth in some Anglican church plants

At a late stage in this thesis a simple survey of growth in recent Anglican church plants became available. (Because it was found at a late stage and there is less detail these results have not been included in the later tables.) As part of an MA dissertation on the ecclesiology of church planting, Alan Bing sent questionnaires to 300 recent Anglican church plants,



including questions about the people now attending those plants. He was attempting to respond to Gill's challenge to check the level of transfer growth in new churches.<sup>21</sup>

No indication was given of when people had joined, and as with the other surveys discussed in this part of the present thesis it relied on categorisation by church leaders. In reporting his results Bing himself recognised the potential problem this might cause, and was also unable to relate his statistics to any other figures for types of growth.<sup>22</sup>

From the 102 replies Bing was able to categorise over 6,000 adult attenders at church plants and found the following proportions:

		without church planting team
transfer growth by house move	17%	~20%
transfer growth from another local church	16%	~20%
fringe attenders	15%	~20%
restored or converted	32%	~40%
church planting team	20%	-

The final column is my calculation in order to compare these results with those in chapter 2. The overall growth reported was 400%, i.e. quintupling the church planting teams, though the period of time was not reported. The composition of that growth is not very different from that reported in chapter 2 (see table 2.34), except the transfer growth in the case of the church plants was much more heavily weighted towards transfer from other local churches. The relatively high proportion of local transfers is referred to later in this thesis, as an apparent feature of church planting, though the overall proportion of transfer growth was found to be similar to that of long established congregations.

### 3.5 Comparisons and Conclusions

The following tables bring together the results from this chapter so they can be compared with the findings of chapter 2.

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<sup>21</sup> A. C. Bing *Impact of Church Planting on the Local Community*, p.58

<sup>22</sup> Alan Bing "Do church plants end up as eclectic congregations?" in *News from Anglican Church Planting Initiatives* Issue 2, Spring 1997

Table 3.10 Movement of church members in the surveys used in chapter 3

Denomination	Area	Survey Date	Abbrev- iation	Joiners	Leavers	Total Movement
% of membership						
AOG	UK	1991-2	A 92	19	9	28
AOG	UK	1992-3	A 93	17½	7	24½
Pioneer	England	1986-91	P 91	25	9	34
Pioneer	England	1991-3	P 93	21	9	30

Table 3.11. Profiles of gains in the surveys in Chapter 3

Proportion of total growth							Proportion of total membership							
%							%							
Transfer growth			Cg	Bg	Rg	Other	Transfer growth			Cg	Bg	Rg	Other	Total
same	change						same	change						
denom	denom	total					denom	denom	total					
A 92	11	26	37	53	4	2	4							
A 93	10	30	40	44	7	7	2	1.8	5.3	7.0	7.7	1.2	1.2	0.3
														17.4
P 81			42	35	11	12	-							
P 86			37	40	13	9	-							
P 91			35	39	15	10	-	-	-	8.7	9.8	3.9	2.6	-
														25.0
P 93			40	42	8	11	-	-	-	8.2	8.6	1.7	2.2	-
														20.7
P 94			48	33	11	8	-	-	-	14.8	10.3	3.3	2.5	-
														30.1

Table 3.12 Profiles of losses in the surveys in chapter 3

Survey	Proportion of total loss					Proportion of total membership				
	Transfer loss			Deaths	%	Transfer loss			Deaths	%
	area	church	total				area	church	total	
	move	move					move	move		
A 92	-	-	46	15	31	8				
A 93	-	-	48	13	29	10	-	-	3.6	1.0
P 81			?	6	?	0				2.2
P 86			?	1	?	8				0.7
P 91			?	3	?	23			?	0.3
P 93			?	2	?	38			?	?
P 94	25	31	56	1	28	14	4.3	5.4	9.7	0.2

In the case of the Pioneer churches the 'other' losses are of people who have joined a church plant. Until the most recent return the other forms of loss were not distinguished unfortunately. The figures for P 94 as a percentage of total attenders are italicised because there is less confidence in them.

From these results and picking up the conclusions from the AOG survey (section 3.2.4) the following points may be made:

1. The overall level of movement in AOG and Pioneer churches is very high, mainly because of the high level of gains, just below 20% in the case of the AOG and above 20% in the case of Pioneer. Perhaps it is not surprising that rates of losses are slightly higher, about 9%, than in the surveys of chapter 2.<sup>23</sup>

In one case (P 91) more than 1/3 of those attending moved in or out per year, over a period of 5 years, and in 1993-4 nearly half those attending moved in or out!

2. The main forms of growth were by transfer and conversion, in roughly equal numbers. This is similar to the Anglican and Baptist surveys in chapter 2, though they tended to show slightly more transfer growth than conversion growth. The problems of definitions remains, but at least all these surveys have a similar dependence on classification by church leaders rather than self-assessment.
3. The evidence is that the AOG and Pioneer churches, encouraging evangelism and not least church planting, had not grown disproportionately by transfer growth, and may have a slightly higher ratio of conversion growth to transfer growth than the longer established congregations.
4. The Pioneer network showed a huge level of gains and losses in 1993/4, but with transfer growth and loss predominating. The proportion lapsing, perhaps nearly 5%, was also very high. It is not known how these figures have changed since 1994, but this may have been

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<sup>23</sup> This pattern is described as the "rapid-growth progressive phase" in Gibbs, *I believe in Church Growth*, p.184

the first sign of a major change in the growth pattern of these Independent churches, leading to a drop in the rate of growth.<sup>24</sup>

Further research on subsequent growth and losses for Pioneer congregations may reveal that this is part of a life phase pattern for the network, as congregations reach a middle age plateau.

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<sup>24</sup> Conversation with Peter Brierley in April 1997 has indicated that overall the Independent churches were no longer growing as they had been and that it was more difficult to obtain reliable statistics from them.

## Chapter Four

### Transfer and other growth in individual church plants from ministerial records: two Anglican case-studies

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Having established some guideline figures for likely rates of different types of church growth in chapters 2 and 3 this short chapter applies those findings to two individual Anglican parishes involved in church planting. This is probably the first case study of detailed empirical growth rates that has been made of church planting in this country. As a result it provides the first test of the efficacy of church planting as a means to overall church growth in an area. It is restricted by the availability of information from the parishes to the initial years of the new congregations.

Church planters are usually evangelists before they are administrators but in the following situations more detailed records have been kept.<sup>1</sup> The types of statistics used by the church planters is given in this chapter and then put into a common form which can be compared with the tables in chapters 2 and 3. This process has been carried out in consultation with the planters to ensure their accuracy, though any remaining inaccuracies are my responsibility.

Both church plants described have grown in the first two years of their lives. The first church plant described has grown very rapidly, largely through transfer growth; the second has grown less quickly, though still at a significant rate, and through new people attending worship to a great extent.

## 4.1 Springfield Church, Wallington, Surrey

### 4.1.1 The initial growth of a church plant

This church began holding Sunday services on Mothering Sunday, 1992 after a period of preparing a planting team of nearly 60 from the parish church. It has grown rapidly, reaching about 200, including children, after 2 years and has continued to grow. It was used as an example of a successful Anglican church plant in a DAWN News Bulletin.<sup>2</sup> Its dramatic growth makes it worth studying to find out from where the growth has come.

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<sup>1</sup> The assistance of Revd Bob Hopkins in making these contacts is gladly acknowledged.

<sup>2</sup> Issue 7, July 1994



The following table records the membership as catalogued by the church's address list and calculated by the minister, Revd Tim Humphrey.<sup>3</sup>

Table 4.1 Growth of Springfield Church, Wallington, 1992-4

Date	Adults	Children	Total
March 1992	62	8	70
September 1992	115	30	145
February 1993	127		
May 1993	142		
September 1994	169	~80	~250

The figures for March 1992 are of the planting team sent out by the parish church. Growth continued fairly steadily until about May 1994 when the church reached about 160 adults. Since then the growth has slowed as they have filled the school gymnasium where they meet.

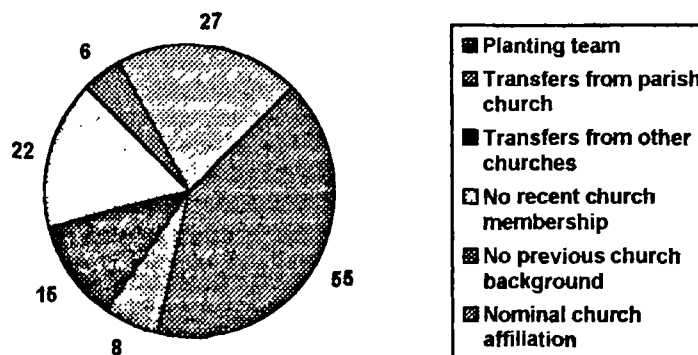
The adult church membership has been analysed in early September 1994 as 62 from the planting team plus 8 more from the parish church, 106 others added and 7 losses (6 because of moving house, 1 who left the church), making a total of 169. One unusual feature of the situation was the very low number of people leaving the congregation during this period, a feature not seen in the next case study.

The pie chart in figure 4.1 was drawn up in February 1993 and uses a classification by the minister. This has been altered in subsequent analysis to one closer to that used in this thesis and relying much more on the self-description of those joining the church. The observation of Tim Humphrey is that many of those describing themselves as Anglican transfers had no living church connection and their allegiance was nominal; such people were part of restoration growth in his opinion, but have been included as transfer growth in the analysis of table 4.2.

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<sup>3</sup> These and all other details supplied in private communication of 14th September 1994 and checked by telephone on 29th September 1994 and on 31st October 1994. As a result of apparent inconsistencies in the first attempt at analysis all the figures were re-checked by Jan Humphrey, who is taking over the task of data analysis for the church!

**Figure 4.1 Composition of Springfield Church, 1993**  
The numbers are of the actual number of people in each category



At this point, in just under a year the church had grown from 62 to 127, growth of 105%. In the following year it grew to about 160: taking this figure the growth rate for 1993-4 was a more modest 26%. Using the information supplied by the Humphreys allows the construction of the following table of types of growth; note the information is recorded both as actual numbers and as percentages of the total growth which is for easy comparison with the data discussed in chapters 2 and 3. The initial church planting team have not been included since they were already worshipping in the parish<sup>4</sup>.

**Table 4.2 Types of growth, Springfield Church, 1992-4**

	Transfer growth			Cg	Rg	Bg	Total
	same	moved	total				
	denom.	denom.					
1992-4	23/20%	46/40%	69/61%	26/23%	19/17%	-	114
1992-3	19/29%	18/28%	37/57%	15/23%	13/20%	-	65
1993-4	4/8%	28/57%	32/65%	11/22%	6/12%	-	49

Note to tables 4.2 and 3: 1992-3 figures are from March 1992 - February 1993

1993-4 figures are from February 1993 - September 1994

<sup>4</sup> This method of treating church planting teams is followed in the analysis of the survey in chapter 6.

Table 4.3 Types of growth as a proportion of 'membership', Springfield Church, '92-4

Percent- ages	Transfer growth			Cg	Rg	Bg	Total
	same denom.	moved denom.	total				
1992-3	31%	29%	60%	24%	21%	-	105%
1993-4	3%	22%	25%	9%	5%	-	39%

4.1.2 Commentary on the growth patterns described

The first feature is the rapid initial growth in the first two years up to the spring of 1994. It is clear from the percentage growth rates and the total numbers joining recorded in table 4.2 that the growth in the second year was much lower. The challenge for the church at this stage was to discover ways of going beyond the "200-barrier" and the size restrictions of their meeting place. They were aware of these problems and were considering a further church plant as a means to further growth.<sup>5</sup> The parish church sending the team had attracted new attenders and had an average Sunday attendance of 240.

The components of the growth are now discussed, beginning with the **transfer growth**:

Table 4.4 Types of transfer growth, Springfield Church, 1992-4

	same denomination	changed denomination	totals
moved house	4	4	8
did not move house	19	42	61
totals	23	46	69

The high level of transfer growth is not surprising in the first year of the new church as it became known in an area where few churches offered the same style of worship. Indeed, the transfer rate of Anglicans is very similar to those found in the surveys of chapter 2 (see table 2.35), though in this case most people did not move house (table 4.4). In the

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<sup>5</sup> DAWN Bulletin Issue 7

second period the Anglican transfers are very low, and no Anglicans had transferred in between May 1993 and September 1994.

It was the very high level of transfers by non-Anglicans (though 14 had been previously confirmed in the Anglican church, and 8 in the Roman Catholic) which resulted in such high overall transfer growth rates. The composition of this group was as follows:

House Church	26
Baptist	4
Free Evangelical	2
Roman Catholic	8 (6 would describe themselves as previously nominal)
Pentecostal	6 (4 of these people moved house)

Most of this group of people lived in the parish or its immediate surroundings and had a desire to worship locally, in a context less formal than was available in other Anglican churches.

Most of the House Church members had been travelling about 5 miles to a church plant which had always struggled. The planting of Springfield church provided an opportunity to worship locally and they transferred at various times by mutual agreement with the church leaders of both churches. The House Church fellowship has since closed. It is possible that the high level of non-Anglican transfers will prove to be an unusual event in the life of this church, largely because of the House Church situation.

The **conversion growth** rate as a proportion of the total 'membership' was high, even in the second year and comparable to the rates of the AOG and Pioneer churches (see table 3.11). Up to that point there has not been the high rate of lapsing noted in those denominations.

The **conversion growth** and **restoration growth** rates were on the low side for Anglican churches when expressed as proportions of the total growth: this is a result of the very high transfer growth rates. However, when expressed as a proportion of the membership, even without including the nominal Christians who regarded themselves as transferring, the growth by 14% through conversions and restorations over 18 months is high. It is comparable to the rates of the fast-growing AOG and Pioneer churches, which might

include people re-baptized as converts or those restored but definitely included as transfers at Springfield.

This analysis suggests that, while concern about the level of transfer growth would not be mis-placed, the level of conversions and restorations was considerably higher than other Anglican churches usually experience and this had promoted mission within the parish. Including the parish church, the number of adults attending Anglican Sunday worship in the parish had gone from about 290 to 410 in 2½ years, an increase of 41%. (These figures are of membership, not attendance, and it is not known how the attendance compares with the membership record.)

The parish church had lost 15 people through moving house, 12 through death and 10 to the Springfield church.<sup>6</sup> The total growth in attenders in the parish over this period was therefore 154 people (made up of an overall increased attendance of 120 and another 34 people no longer attending because of movement or death).

The growth included 45 people who were converts or restored in faith attending Springfield church and 40 at the parish church, which was therefore 55% of the total growth in the parish; the parish church in fact had a higher proportion(85%) of its growth in this way than Springfield (45%). (Note that most of the remaining growth is transfers from outside the parish, those moving to the church plant from the parish church are not counted as part of the growth of the parish.)

In summary, the effect of church planting in this parish was to increase the Anglican membership by 41% over 2½ years, with growth at both the parish church and the church plant. Just over half the total growth was by conversions and those renewed in faith, most of the remaining growth being non-Anglican transfer growth at the church plant.

In view of the finding that the typical Anglican church grew rather more by transfers than conversion, this suggests that the initial period of church planting in this parish had sufficiently achieved the aim of drawing new attenders to church attendance. This conclusion can be made in the full knowledge of the high level of non-Anglican transfer growth.

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<sup>6</sup> Figures contained in a letter from Tim Humphreys, 4/11/94

## 4.2 Cramlington, Northumberland

### 4.2.1 Two church plants simultaneously

The parish of Cramlington, a new town in Northumberland, tried the unusual experiment of planting two new congregations within a fortnight of each other in October 1993.<sup>7</sup> This arose from a situation in which four helpful factors came together:

1. rapid population growth
2. a new incumbent with previous experience of church planting
3. a congregation which recognised the need and potential for church growth
4. a large enough team of ministers to oversee the projects.

The old parish church is in the middle of effectively a new town, created from an old mining village, with a current population of 30,000, expected to grow to 46,000. It is part of the Blyth Valley district, which in 1989 had the lowest attendance across all denominations of any district in England.<sup>8</sup>

The Anglican congregation had reached an average attendance of adults and children during Lent of about 150 and somewhat less in the autumn (see table 4.5 and figure 4.2). This attendance appeared to have plateaued. With the identification of particular areas of the parish from which few worshippers came, the need to church plant became clear.

The team of ministers consisted of four clergy and two Readers able to give substantial time.<sup>9</sup> In these circumstances it was possible to provide full time leadership to the two church plants, without depleting the ministerial team at the parish church unduly.

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<sup>7</sup> Information kindly supplied by the Rector, Revd Murray Haig, telephone, 9th September 1994, and subsequently by Revd Tony Pattison (12/9/94) and Sheena Ward (13/9/94).

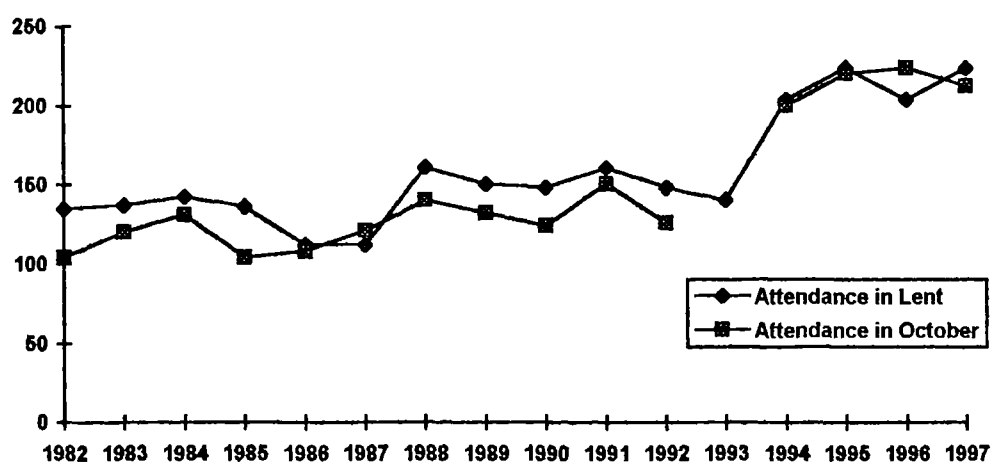
<sup>8</sup> Across all denominations 3% of the population attended church in the 1989 MARC Europe survey.

<sup>9</sup> The existence of the church plants seems to have also stimulated the call for further Readers, with 4 in training in the years immediately after the planting too place.

Table 4.5 Average attendance at main Anglican services, adults and children, Cramlington, 1982-97

Year	Attendance in Lent	Attendance in October
1982	135	104
1983	137	120
1984	142	131
1985	136	104
1986	112	108
1987	112	121
1988	161	140
1989	150	132
1990	148	124
1991	160	150
1992	148	126
1993	140	-
1994	204	200
1995	224	220
1996	204	224
1997	213	

Figure 4.2 Average attendances at main Anglican services, Cramlington



The figure for October 1993 has been disregarded because the church plants were started that month and had especially high attendances for their initial services. The figures prior

to 1994 are for the parish church, St Nicholas; the figures from 1994 include the church plants, St Peter's and St Andrew's. The table and the graph demonstrate growth in attendance of approximately one third within a year at Anglican services across the parish. The figure for Lent 1995 indicated that growth was continuing, with an increase in attendance of a further 10% from 1994. Subsequently the overall growth ceased, with attendances plateaued at the new higher level.

The figures for 1994-97 for the three churches are shown in table 4.6 as follows:

Table 4.6 Attendance at each church, Cramlington, 1994-7<sup>10</sup>

	St Nicholas	St Peter	St Andrew	Total
Lent 1994	81	72	50	203
October 1994	75	69	56	200
Lent 1995	88	84	52	224
October 1995	69	87	64	220
Lent 1996	70	83	51	204
October 1996	65	93	66	224
Lent 1997	67	89	57	213

This breakdown shows the greatly reduced attendance at St Nicholas, declining after the church planting period. Across the parish the increased attendances at the church plants raised the attendance level, with St Peter's especially showing continuing signs of numerical growth. Further comments on the church plants are made in the following sections.

#### 4.2.2 Growth at St Peter's

St Peter's began public worship on 3rd October 1993 in Northburn First School. It is set an area of about 1200 new homes initially, with building still continuing in 1997. It is fairly middle class, largely owner-occupied housing, with younger families. It was led by the Reader, Sheena Ward, and a Reader-in-Training, John Preston, with the Team Rector taking a Holy Communion service once a month.

<sup>10</sup> Information from Revd Tony Pattison, April 1995, updated April 1997 by 'phone



At the opening service there were 80 adults and 68 children. Of the total 148, 21 (10 adults) were in the planting team, 14 were visitors from the planting church, 14 visitors from other churches and 99 were lapsed or unchurched. By April 1994 there was an average attendance of 70, with 110 regular attenders.<sup>11</sup>

The 100 regular attenders comprised the following groups:

initial church planting team	21
later transfers from the planting church	20
churchgoers who moved into the area	3
lapsed or unchurched	66
(mainly restoration growth)	—
total	110

Since then the average attendance had increased (see table 4.6) by 17% between Lent 1994 and Lent 1995, with the growth at a much lower rate subsequently. The increase from 1994-5 was mainly due to more frequent attendance by a similar number of people: the number described as regular attenders had increased by less than 5% to 115. However, as has been shown in the analysis of other surveys, this figure conceals considerable movement in and out of the church. Between 1994 and 1995, 31 people left and 36 people joined the church.

The types of growth were as follow, in more detail than the previous year:

later transfers from the planting church	3
Anglican churchgoers from outside the town	2
transfers from other churches in the town	11
lapsed (restoration growth)	10
unchurched	7
babies born (biological growth)	<u>3</u>
total	36

For ease of comparison these results are summarised in tables 4.7 and 4.8 which are of the same form as tables 4.2 and 4.3 on Springfield church.

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<sup>11</sup> These figures have been supplied by John Preston in a private communication, 14/5/95. I am grateful to Dr Preston for checking the text; any remaining inaccuracies and the interpretation are my responsibility.

Table 4.7 Types of growth, St Peter's, Cramlington, 1993-5

	Transfer growth			Cg	Rg	Bg	Total
	same denom.	moved denom.	total t.g.				
1993-4	20/22%	3/3%	23/26%	66/74%		-	89
1994-5	5/14%	11/31%	16/44%	7/19%	10/28%	3/8%	36

Note on both tables: 1993-4 is October to Lent; 1994-5 is Lent to Lent

Table 4.8 Types of growth as a proportion of 'membership', St Peter's, Cramlington, 1993-5

	Transfer growth			Cg	Rg	Bg	Total
Percent- ages	same denom.	moved denom.	total t.g.				
1993-4	95%	14%	109%	314%		-	423%
1994-5	5%	10%	15%	6%	9%	3%	33%

Unlike the case of Springfield church there has been a large amount of movement out of the church: in 1994-5, 31 people left the church, described by John Preston as follows.

transfer loss through house moves	16
(of these 13 went abroad, mainly temporarily)	
transfers back to the planting church	4
lapsing	<u>11</u>
total	31

#### 4.2.3 Commentary on growth at St Peter's

This church plant grew very rapidly in its first year, multiplying the planting team by five-fold. Furthermore, three-quarters of that growth came through restoration or conversion growth. This was an outstanding achievement, even taking into account those people lapsing in the second year. Those eleven described as lapsed had not totally stopped their attendance but came too infrequently for the church leadership to regard them as regular attenders.

In the second year of the church's life there was a trend to a more usually observed pattern of growth, with movement in and out almost balancing. The growth in commitment seen in the higher average attendance suggests that the new attenders were being incorporated into the church. Subsequently growth slowed considerably, partly because they had filled the hall they were meeting in. The church was planning a further church plant in October 1997 because of reaching this constraint, and because of the possibility of working in an area of new housing.

The transfer growth in the early stages is examined in more detail in the following two tables for 1993-4 and 1994-5:

Table 4.9 Types of transfer growth, St Peter's, Cramlington, 1993-4

	same denomination	changed denomination	totals
moved house	0	0	0
did not move house	20	3	23
totals	20	3	23

As already noted, transfer growth was 26% (23 out of 89 people) of the total growth in the first few months of the church's life. The 20 Anglicans not moving house all came from the planting church (St Nicholas) after the start of the plant. Taking account of the transfers from other churches in the town after the church plant had begun does not materially affect the conclusion that the first year of the life of St Peter's resulted in significant church growth for the parish as a whole.

Table 4.10 Types of transfer growth, St Peter's, Cramlington, 1994-5

	same denomination	changed denomination	totals
moved house	0	0	0
did not move house	5/14%	11/31%	16/44%
totals	5/14%	11/31%	16/44%

In this table the percentages in italics are the proportion of the total growth represented by each category. Thus the proportion of growth which was transfer growth increased considerably in 1994-5. It was especially high for transfer growth with no house moves involved. Nonetheless there was still a healthy level of new attenders joining: the conversion growth rate was 19% of the total growth and the restoration growth rate was 28%.

If the categories are genuinely comparable with those used in chapter 2 for the Anglican surveys, then in its second year St Peter's growth profile was very similar to the diocesan averages. That may imply that the benefits for growth of being a church plant were over for St Peter's by the second year. Two years on (1997), the updated attendance figures showed that growth had indeed slowed down: from October 1995 -96 it was 6%, from Lent 1996-97 it was 7%.

In a national context this is still a result against the trend of decline. It does also indicate the powerful dynamic of growth possible when starting a new church, a growth which slowed very quickly.

#### 4.2.4 Growth at St Andrew's

St Andrew's began public worship on 17th October 1993 in Beacon Hill Community Centre. This church also has about 1200 homes in the area it serves, with a population of about 3,000. It is cut off from the rest of the parish by the East Coast main railway line. It is generally a less prosperous area than the Northburn area.

At the opening service there were 51 adults and 21 children. Of these, there were 10 adults from the planting team and everyone else was lapsed or unchurched. By October 1994 the average attendance was about 35 adults and 21 children, giving an average attendance of 56 (see table 4.6). The growth in attendance was therefore 460% from October 1993 to October 1994. The composition of that growth is described next:

The amount of **transfer growth** in the year since the opening was very small: the following table shows from where the adult transfers came. These were just 3 out of 25 extra adult attenders:

Table 4.11 Transfer growth at St Andrew's, Cramlington, 1993-4

	same denomination	changed denomination	totals
moved house	1	0	1
did not move house	2	0	2
totals	3	0	3

The rest of the growth, including all the children, came from people who had not attended a church in Cramlington, though the minister, Tony Pattison, described most of them as **restoration growth**, rather than conversion growth. Thus 88% of the first year's growth was through restoration of the lapsed. Both in the level of growth and its composition in the first year St Andrew's also justified the decision to plant a new church.

By Lent 1995 St Andrew's, like St Peter's, saw its level of growth slow considerably: from October 1995 - 1996 the attendance grew by 3% (2 people), and from Lent 1996 - 1997 it grew by 12% (6 people). It would seem that both church plants reached a position not dissimilar to the generality of Anglican churches within 18 months of starting a regular Sunday service.

### 4.3 Conclusions from these case studies

1. Each of the 3 church plants studied grew very rapidly in its first year, by from 105% to 460% of the planting team numbers.
2. The rate of growth slowed considerably in the second year, though 2 of the 3 did grow measurably in membership, overall by 33% and 5%, a result against the national trend of decline in Anglican attendance.  
Subsequently in the two church plants which were studied further the growth was lower again, though they were still growing in attendance.
3. In one case about two-thirds of the growth came through transfers, in the other two less than a quarter. The record of the plants themselves is therefore mixed on the issue of promoting increased church attendance in a given area.

4. In both parishes there was increased combined attendance at Anglican services, by over 40% and by 60%, in each case over a period of 2 years. In the first case about half the increase came from new attenders and in the second case it was about three-quarters.
5. Both parishes concerned can justify their church plants on the basis of increased church attendance, taking full account of people transferring from other congregations. In the longer term it would seem that further planting of some kind might be required to see growth at the levels discussed here.

## Part II

### Levels of movement between churches, as defined by the individuals concerned

## Chapter Five

### Selecting Churches to study

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In this chapter the way in which the four parishes surveyed in detail were selected is explained. They are put in the wider diocesan context by a discussion of attendance trends in the diocese as a whole.

## 5.1 The diocese of Chelmsford

At the initial stage of this part of the project it was decided to concentrate on the diocese of Chelmsford for convenience of data collection. This was not unduly restrictive as the diocese is the second largest in England by population (2.5 million in mid 1990). In 1991 there were 374 benefices, 489 parishes and 611 churches.<sup>1</sup>

### 5.1.1 Brief description of the diocese

The Christian faith came to the area during the Roman occupation: there is evidence of Christian churches in Colchester during the third and fourth centuries.<sup>2</sup> The area was re-evangelised in the Saxon period from both the Roman and Celtic churches. In A.D.604 Augustine consecrated Mellitus as bishop of London "to preach in the province of the East Saxons"<sup>3</sup>. Under a later king the area reverted to paganism<sup>4</sup>. The church planting mission undertaken by St Cedd and another priest in A.D.653 was more successful. After his consecration as bishop of the East Saxons he built several churches, including the church of St Peter-on-the-Wall which is still in use.<sup>5</sup> It was soon after the death of Cedd that Essex was taken into the diocese of London and it remained so until 1846.<sup>6</sup>

It was briefly part of the diocese of Rochester, and then of the diocese of St Albans. The present diocese was founded in 1914, consisting "of the County of Essex and that part of the County of Kent which lies north of the River Thames"<sup>7,8</sup>.

The diocese today is very varied, including inner city parishes in the East End of London, suburban areas, market towns, seaside resorts, remote mud flats and tiny villages dotted

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<sup>1</sup>Statistics from *Church of England Yearbook 1993*, p.64

<sup>2</sup>J.R. Smith *Medieval Essex Churches* Introduction

<sup>3</sup>Bede *Ecclesiastical History* Book 2, Chapter 3, p.104

<sup>4</sup>ibid. Chapter 5, p.109

<sup>5</sup>ibid. Book 3, Chapter 22, p.178f

<sup>6</sup>Malcolm Carter *The fort of Othona and the chapel of St Peter* p.9

<sup>7</sup>*London Gazette* 23rd January 1914



about the countryside. Because of its size and variety it is divided into three episcopal areas: Barking which is the London boroughs of the diocese, Bradwell which is a more mixed area, and Colchester which is mostly very rural apart from the ancient town of Colchester itself.

### 5.1.2 Attendance trends

Investigating the current church attendance in the diocese has been done by examining the diocesan count. The count is done annually for quota purposes. The present system began in 1981 but the records at the diocesan office go back only to 1984. The count is taken on five Sundays in April and May, usually following Easter. If Easter is late it is not included. It included all those attending aged 16 and over. From 1994 onwards the count excluded those aged under 18. Parishes are told not to count double attenders twice. In addition, any unusually large services can be noted and a reduction in the average figure agreed with the diocesan authorities. This is intended to remove very occasional attenders from the count, for example, a large party attending for a baptism. As a result the diocesan count can be expected to be lower than the MARC Europe survey figures and the average attendance figures returned to Church House, Westminster.<sup>9</sup>

Table 5.1 gives the overall figures for the diocese. The figures for 1994 onwards are the actual count; to be compared with previous years it needs to be increased for 16 and 17 year olds, since the basis of counting was changed in 1994 to exclude those age groups.

An estimate for a correction was made on the basis of the national age structure for the Anglican church, recorded from the 1989 MARC Europe survey.<sup>10</sup> This suggested that a "18+" attendance figure should be increased by 2.7% to be comparable with the "16+" figure. This would turn the actual count in 1994 of 32,355 into 33,229, and the 1995 count of 31,798 into one of 32,657. This suggests a real downward trend in attendance

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<sup>8</sup>*Chelmsford Diocesan Year Book 1992* p.12

<sup>9</sup>Approximately 20 (about 4%) parishes fail to make a return in any given year. In these cases the attendance is assumed to be the same as the previous year's and that figure included in the total. This may mean that the count is a slight under-estimate of the actual total but it is unlikely to be more than 200 (about 0.6%) and is similar each year.

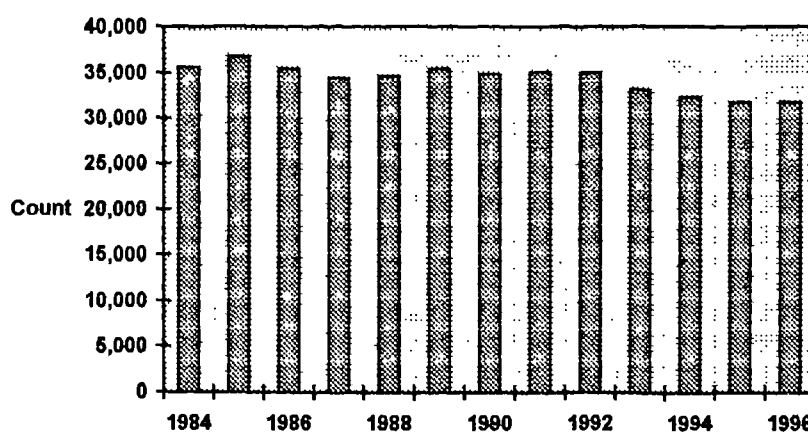
<sup>10</sup> *UK Christian Handbook 1994-95* Table 14, p.247 gives the numbers in each age group, allowing a more precise calculation than the percentages in *Prospects for the Nineties*. It is assumed that there are equal numbers in each year group between 15 and 19. This is not strictly the case, since there tends to be a drop in attendance with age but the year groups we need are the third and fourth out of five and so the assumption should not be too misleading.

for the diocese as a whole from the higher figures in 1989 and 1991, which were in turn lower than the figures for 1984-6.

**Table 5.1 Diocesan Count, Chelmsford, 1984-1996**

Year	Count	Adjusted Count	Percentage Annual Change	Percentage Decadal Change
1984	35,523		-	-
1985	36,717		+3.4	-
1986	35,372		-3.7	-
1987	34,401		-2.7	-
1988	34,647		-0.7	-
1989	35,378		+2.1	-
1990	34,831		-1.5	-
1991	35,072		+0.7	-
1992	34,940		-0.4	-
1993	33,153		-5.1	-
1994	32,355	33,229	-2.4	-8.9
1995	31,798	32,657	-1.7	-13.4
1996	31,760	32,617	-0.1	-10.2

**Figure 5.1 Attendance Count, Diocese of Chelmsford, 1984-96**



The diocesan figures can be compared with the findings of the MARC Europe surveys<sup>11</sup>, based on a single Sunday in October. These are for the county of Essex; the diocesan count has been adjusted to take account of the parishes in Greater London.

<sup>11</sup>*Prospects for the Nineties: South East (North)*, p.32

Table 5.2 Comparison of diocesan count with MARC Europe surveys, 1975-89

Survey	1975	1979	1985	1989
Diocesan Count			25,693	25,442
% change, from previous count				-1
MARC Europe	40,000	37,000	33,400	30,800
% change, from previous count	--	-8	-10	-8

There is a real difference in the rates of decline as measured by these two methods: according to the MARC Europe survey there was a drop in attendance of 16.5% between 1975 and 1985, and of 16.7% between 1979 and 1989. As the adjusted count in table 5.2 shows, there is little comparability between the size of the two counts or the rate of change.<sup>12</sup> The diocesan count gives a drop in attendance of 6.6% in the nine years between 1984 and 1993. Adjusting the 1994 figure for the change of counting procedure the 10 year decline between 1984 and 1994 is 6.2%

From the count figures and the MARC Europe surveys we can conclude that decline in attendance is a real feature in the diocese as a whole but that the rate at which it is occurring is not clear. It does mean that any church with a definite growth pattern is bucking the trend in the diocese.

## 5.2 The large parishes of the diocese

Since the thesis was originally intended to examine the effects of church planting, parishes where it was known to be taking place were considered first. A survey undertaken by the then Director of Mission, Canon Michael Proctor, was helpful at this stage.<sup>13</sup> The selection was next restricted to parishes with count of 200+ in one of the years 1991, 1992 or 1993. There were three reasons for the restriction to large parishes:

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<sup>12</sup> The MARC Europe survey includes as adults those aged 15 and over; a generous estimate of the number aged 15 and 16 might be 10% of the children's attendance figures which would reduce the 1985 total by 1,030 and the 1989 by 1,010.

1. Such parishes are likely to be large enough to consider church planting if there is only one congregation at present.
2. A church of 200 is often thought to be at a barrier to further growth without extra staffing: what was the case in the larger parishes in the diocese?
3. It would be easier to obtain a useful number of individual responses by approaching larger churches.

To assist in the selection process table 5.3 was produced of large churches in the diocese.<sup>14</sup> Information was then added to the table on population, the number of buildings in use, and about known church-plants. In some cases this includes new churches started as daughter churches, with a rather different philosophy to most current church-plants.

Seven parishes were considered at this stage for inclusion in the survey: Cranham Park, Hornchurch, Billericay and Little Burstad, Great Baddow, Hawkwell, Rayleigh, and St John's Colchester.

- Of these, the church plant at Great Baddow was in 1958 and so not of current interest.
- One church plant at Billericay was forced to close after the loss of the staff member leading it, though a separate 'resurrection' plant has continued.
- The parish of Hornchurch were unable to help because of staffing problems at the time of the survey.
- The church plant in Rayleigh was too recent to make effective use of the questionnaire.
- This left the longer established church plants in Cranham Park and Hawkwell as the main opportunities for surveying church plants.
- The newer plant in Colchester was also able to assist but the parish church there did not.
- The parish of Billericay was included as the largest parish in the diocese (by count), thus producing a large number of responses and for convenience as the parish in which the author is licensed. It provides a point of comparison both for the recent church plants and for the surveys reviewed in previous chapters, administered by church leaders.

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<sup>13</sup> I am grateful to Canon Michael Proctor, then Diocesan Missioner, for supplying copies of the replies from all the parishes in the diocese which responded to his request for information.

<sup>14</sup> Data for Tables 5.1, 5.2 and 5.3 was obtained from the Chelmsford Diocesan office

Therefore, from the seven parishes considered, congregations from four were surveyed: Cranham Park, Billericay and Little Burstead, Hawkwell, and St John's Colchester.

Tables 5.3 and 5.4 enable the surveyed parishes to be seen in the context of the other large parishes of the diocese. Table 5.3 is broader in recording all the parishes with a count of 200+ in 1991-3, table 5.4 examines over a longer period (1984-94) the survey parishes and those which have shown signs of growth .

Table 5.3 Parishes with a Count of 200+ in 1991, 1992 or 1993, Diocese of Chelmsford

Parish	Diocesan No.	Count 1991	Count 1992	Count 1993	No. of buildings used	Parish pop. <sup>15</sup>	% of parish attending in '92	Dates of Church Plants	Date of new Incumbent
Barking Team	01.01	377	336	250	3	33,125	1.1		1993*
Loughton St.J.Bp	02.09	219	230	203	3	16,675	1.4		1992
Waltham Abbey Holy Cross T.M.	02.13	249	252	207	2	19,311	1.3		1988
Cranham Park St. Luke	04.02	327	368	333	3	8,259	4.5	1983, '86, '90	1992*
Harold Wood St. Peter	04.06	389	329	400	1	7,962	4.1		1987
Hornchurch St. Andrew	04.08	431	406	386	3	25,144	1.6	1990	1992
Romford St. Edward	04.22	334	350	330	2	9,335	3.7		1992*
Uppminster St. Laurence	04.24	212	200	172	1	12,923	1.5		1986
Woodford S.S. Mary, Philip&James	07.21	239	203	N/A	1	9,228	2.2		1964
Woodford Wells All Sts.	07.23	401	394	389	1	10,469	3.8		1975

<sup>15</sup> Population figures from the 1994/5 Diocesan Yearbook, which were calculated from the 1991 general census by a team based at the London School of Economics.

Chingford S.S. Peter & Paul	08.01	304	314	264	3	18,727	1.7	1992
Shenfield St. Mary	09.18	260	215	197	1	5,427	4.0	1986
Billericay & L. Burstead	10.03	459	453	410	4	27,244	1.7	1980
Wickford T.M.	10.12	217	165	188	3	26,958	0.6	1993*
Chelmsford Cath.	11.03	309	298	253	1	1,705	17.5	1982
Galleywood St. Michael	11.12	235	262	248	2	6,811	3.8	1987
Gt. Baddow T.M.	11.13	392	431	352	2	13,253	3.3	1958
Springfield All Sts.	11.25	215	152	141	1	9,801	1.6	1991
Hawkevell St. Mary	16.06	266	249	225	3	10,049	2.5	1986, '88
Rayleigh H Trinity	16.10	221	238	258	3	27,601	0.9	1992
Colchester St. Jn.	20.07	247	235	275	1	7,899	3.0	1992
West Mersea SS Peter & Paul	20.21	184	200	179	1	6,872	2.9	1981
Saffron Walden District	26.14	228	228	227	2	15,051	1.5	1983
Frinton St. M.M.	27.06	253	243	228	2	5,456	4.5	1984

Listed by diocesan number      \*date previous incumbent left

The parish counts for the parishes in table 5.3 were then examined back to 1984, the earliest records available from the diocesan office.<sup>16</sup> Various methods were tried to determine a 'growing' church. In the context of a declining diocesan attendance this was not easy. The eventual criterion used is inadequate as a true measure of growth but shows the erratic behaviour of the count for most parishes: any parish growing by 10% in one year at least twice was included. Initially, the additional criterion of a count 10% higher in 1993 than 1984 was also used but only three parishes (Barking, Romford and St John's, Colchester) met both criteria. There were parishes which nearly satisfied the first criterion but none had a count 10% higher in 1993 than in 1984; in fact only one (Harold Wood) had a higher count in 1993 than in 1984.

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<sup>16</sup> The help of Gunvor Pound and Terry Gray is gratefully acknowledged.



Table 5.4 Large churches which have grown between 1984 and 1994 by 10% p.a. at least twice

Parish	84	85	86	87	88	89	90	91	92	93	94	95
Barking T.M.	209	235	228	220	242	297	351	377	336	250	295	303
Billerica T.M.	401	440	460	432	440	439	451	459	453	410	383	354
Colchester St John's	155	156	156	159	176	251	290	247	235	275	298	286
Cranham Park	332	362	296	315	327	298	313	327	368	333	328	325
Dedham	147	151	138	138	138	213	226	190	197	187	158	158
Hawkwell	253	229	240	275	225	233	250	266	249	225	190	221
Hornchurch St Andrew	379	419	496	380	368	362	391	431	406	386	360	338
Romford St Edward's	292	330	320	286	350	315	335	334	350	330	295	266
Shenfield St Mary	227	266	266	243	253	241	229	260	215	197	155	155
Waltham Abbey T.M.	237	270	228	206	190	243	220	249	252	207	215	212
Woodford SS Mary,	275	315	250	233	242	249	209	239	203	203	221	210
Philip&Jas												

Note: The parishes in **bold** are those involved in church-planting during this period.

This table could be showing the failure of churches to retain new attenders in a manner which leads to sustained growth, though there is also evidence from Electoral Roll figures that suggests that less frequent attendance by individuals accounts for much of the decline in weekly average attendance.<sup>17</sup>

Of the parishes which satisfied the proposed growth criteria, Barking grew dramatically from 1984 to 1991 by 80%, then lost attenders rapidly to 1993 (34% of the peak figure), and recovered somewhat in 1994 and 1995.

St John's Colchester showed the most consistent growth, from 1984 to 1990 by 87%, then falling 19% by 1992, and growing over the next three years by 33% from the low point, though also showing a drop of 8% in 1995.

Romford showed an inconsistent pattern; by 1994 it was only just above its 1984 count and below that in 1995.

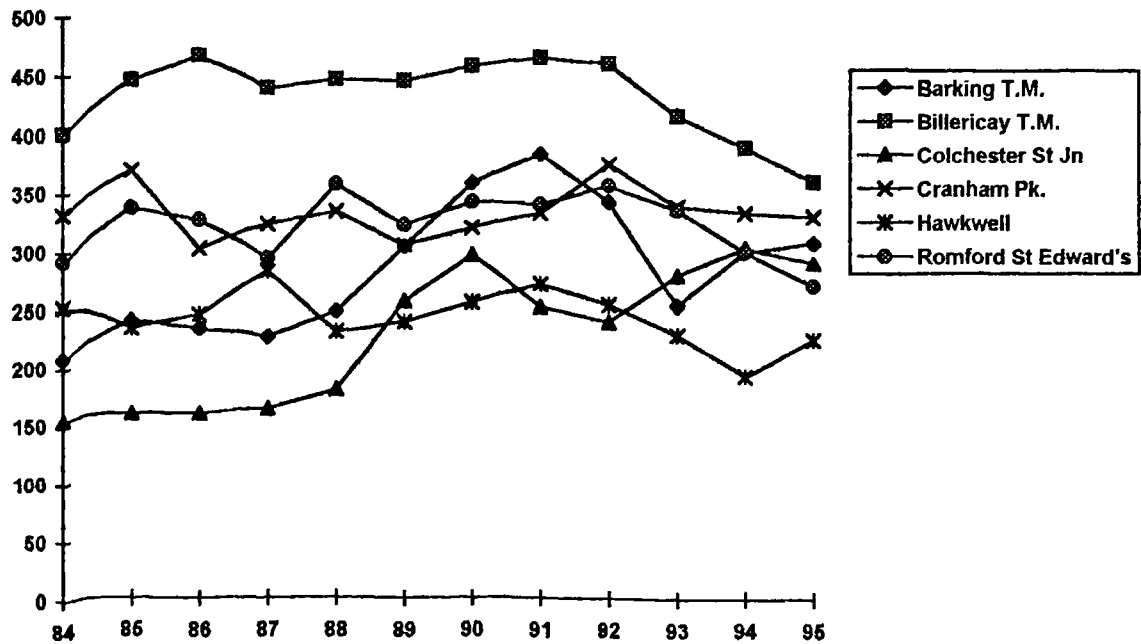
Of 33 large parishes considered for table 5.4, from 1984 to 1993 14 (42%) declined by 10% or more (in some cases much more), only 5 (15%) grew by more than 10% and 14 were relatively static. Yet 9 of the relatively static parishes had had 10% annual growth on two occasions, implying that there have considerable losses at other times. There are likely to be unique features to the problems of each parish but these results indicate the need for help while a parish is growing, so that potential difficulties can be spotted. Such action could increase church attendance without any extra evangelism. This finding bears out the comments in chapter 2 that fluctuations in individual parishes were almost certain to be greater than the average for dioceses or deaneries.

The following graph illustrates the parish count figures for the four parishes surveyed and the other two parishes which met the growth criteria set above. It demonstrates in a graphic way the fairly chaotic changes in levels of church attendance.

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<sup>17</sup> See also the recent reports on Anglican and Roman Catholic attendance trends: anecdotal evidence on less frequent attendance is given by Rodney Schofield *Church Times* 7<sup>th</sup> February 1997 and Clifford Longley *The Tablet* 22<sup>nd</sup> February 1997.

Figure 5.2 Attendance Count in selected parishes, 1984-95



### 5.3 The parishes surveyed

The questionnaires returned were obtained in the following numbers from each congregation. Table 5.5 also indicates the type of congregation being surveyed. The churches labelled 'established' were planted at least 10 or more years ago, in some cases considerably more (800 years ago!). All the church plants concerned are in the parish of the planting congregation. The congregations at St John's Billericay, Moor Lane, Cranham Park and St Mary's, Hawkwell were all church plants into existing church buildings, with very small congregations.<sup>18</sup> The other church plants were meeting in rented premises, without any other ecclesiastical connection. Each has its own characteristics, mentioned in the chapter on the appropriate parish.

<sup>18</sup> Alex Welby (in his paper *Replanting*) has argued that if a church has dropped below 30 members it requires a new start, since "so little is left that there is nothing that can be built upon." p.14, note 42. He argues from a position of advocating re-planting to generate church growth. On his criterion of size all three congregations were straightforward plants and not replants. In view of the number of examples of church planting in this survey it was more straightforward to accept Welby's view in comparing the congregations. It seems there are some effects of even a few people remaining in the building, but a larger survey would be needed to investigate the details.

Table 5.5 Distribution of survey responses by congregations

Parish	Congregation	Code	No. of		% of '93		New
			forms	Adults	count	Est.	
Billericay	Christ Church	BC	189	176	109	✓	
	Emmanuel	BE	141	107	59	✓	
	St John's	BJ	36	32	86		'89
	St Mary the Virgin	BM	47	46	148	✓	
	<b>Parish Total</b>		413	361	88		
St John's	St John's	-	0	0	0		
Colchester	Highwoods	CH	57	57	102		'92
	<b>Parish Total</b>		57	57	21		
Cranham Park	St Luke's 9.15 am	CN	68	62	79	✓	
	St Luke's 11am	CE	52	51	77	✓	
	St Luke's 6.30pm	CS	10	10	18	✓	
	Moor Lane	CM	52	52	67		'83
	Community Church	CC	51	50	75		'86
	<b>Parish Total</b>		233	225	68		
Hawkevell	Emmanuel	HE	124	103		✓	
	Golden Cross	HG	73	52			'86
	St Mary's	HM	34	27			'88
	<b>Parish Total</b>		231	182	81		
<b>Totals</b>			934	825		555	270

Note: the last two totals of the split between long established churches and church plants are for adults

The column headed percentage of 1993 count gives an indication of the response in terms of a typical attendance figure for each church at the time of the survey.

From table 5.5 we find that 67% of the adult survey forms were returned from members of long established churches, and 33% from church plants. Clearly this is not representative of the total Church of England population. Also, the parishes surveyed are not fully representative in their theological stances.

However, the survey does include responses from 555 people attending long established churches which means there is a substantial base of results from such situations. Within the constraints of this project it was thought preferable not to regard churchmanship as a variable, and this was a good fit with the parishes willing and able to co-operate in the survey. There is clearly scope to extend such a survey into parishes of other theological positions.

The similarities and dissimilarities between the congregations is discussed in the chapters (7-10) on the individual parishes.

## Chapter Six

### A Self-Administered Survey of Certain Churches in the Diocese of Chelmsford

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## 6.1 Describing the Survey Method

This chapter sets out the results of a survey undertaken by the author on the four parishes in the Chelmsford diocese selected in chapter 5. The survey is of a different kind to those analysed in previous chapters which depended on results given by church leaders. The survey described here was of responses by individuals attending a church service.

Clearly this method means considerably more work in analysing the results for one congregation. The advantages are that it allows individuals to describe their own perceptions of their faith journeys, in finding changing patterns over time, and in being able to correlate responses to individual questions. As will be seen in section 6.4 this revealed some interesting features which surveys dependent on leadership responses could not show. Of especial interest are the motivations given for joining a new church, compared with reasons for leaving another church, or not having had previous church membership. Changing patterns over time in the reasons for transfer growth seem to be revealed by this survey.

The first survey was undertaken at the author's church, Christ Church, Billericay, in March 1993 as part of a wider survey on aspects of the worship at the church. Questionnaires used previously in other churches were obtained and a draft questionnaire drawn up. This was assessed by a small working group for coverage of the issues of interest to the church and clarity of language. A few changes in wording were made as a result. The interest in the topic of worship at that time in the congregation helped to ensure a very high response rate to the questionnaire.

After this first survey had been partially analysed one change was made to the survey sent to other churches: in question 5, "Years in this church", the response 10+ years was split into 11-20 years and 20+ years. This was because of the large number in this category in the Christ Church survey. Two variants of the basic form were produced, one for the long established churches and one for the recent church plants, taken as less than 10 years old. Copies of the forms are in Appendices A and B.



A member of the clergy in the selected parishes was approached and the church invited to take part. The parish of Hawkwell also accepted the invitation to add its own questions and their question on location of their church attenders is included in the analysis in chapter 9.

The survey was carried out in most churches on what they regarded as a typical Sunday in May to July 1993; in the case of Highwoods, Colchester the congregation was surveyed in October 1993. All the forms filled in were returned for analysis, along with a brief summary form filled in by a church leader.

## 6.2 Analysing the Survey

The forms from the Christ Church survey were analysed by Philip Drake, a church member with considerable experience in working with data bases. To do this he used Microsoft Access version 1. The data from the other churches were input into DataEase for Windows version 1.1 initially but then converted to Access version 2 for the majority of the analysis.

Checks were made on the accuracy of the data input by comparing every tenth form with its computer counterpart. Overall few errors were found. Some errors were found in questions 4 and 5 where some of the people inputting data misinterpreted the answers. Since different people had done this task it was fairly easy to find the areas of the survey needing further detailed checking. As a result, in addition to the 10% check, all the forms were checked from Moor Lane and the St Luke's 11.15a.m. congregation at Cranham Park, Highwoods, Colchester, Golden Cross, Hawkwell, St Mary's, Hawkwell and the first 26 from Emmanuel, Hawkwell. This was a total of 271 forms, 29% of the survey. All the questions on the examined forms were checked for accuracy of data input.

## 6.3 Survey Results from all the Churches Surveyed

In the discussion of the survey results important findings are highlighted by putting them in **bold print**; these findings are then collected in the summary (section 6.5) at the end of the chapter.

Apart from the first two tables and Q.6 any replies from 0-15 year olds have been excluded since different churches had very different practices for this age group: in some cases no forms were filled in by this age group because they were part of a separate meeting, while other churches had a reasonable number of responses.

Questions 1 and 2 asked for gender and age group. The combined results are recorded in table 6.1.

Table 6.1 Age-gender numbers, all survey

Age group	0-15	16-30	31-45	46-60	61-75	75+	None	Total
Female	71	80	173	152	64	35	3	578
Male	37	61	113	80	48	9	2	350
Totals	108	141	286	232	112	44	5	934*

\*The overall total includes 6 forms on which the gender box was not ticked

These are calculated as percentages of the total survey in the following table, excluding those who did not answer both questions:

Table 6.2 Age-gender percentages, all survey

Age group	0-15	16-30	31-45	46-60	61-75	75+	Total
<i>Percentages</i>							
Female	8	9	19	16	7	4	63
Male	4	7	12	9	5	1	38
Totals	12	15	31	25	12	5	100

Comparison with the 1989 MARC Europe survey results for Anglican churches across the country confirms that young people aged 0-15 were under represented in this survey, being 26% of all Anglican church-goers in the 1989 survey.<sup>1</sup> The under-representation was entirely expected as younger children were not likely to fill in the questionnaire. The following two

tables compare the age/gender distribution of this survey with the MARC Europe findings, excluding the 0-15 year olds and those not responding to one of the questions, and expressing the results as percentages.

Table 6.3 Age-gender percentages, adults

Age group	16-30	31-45	46-60	61-75	75+	
<i>Percentages</i>						<i>Total</i>
Female	10	21	19	8	4	62
Male	7	14	10	6	1	38
Totals	17	35	28	14	5	100

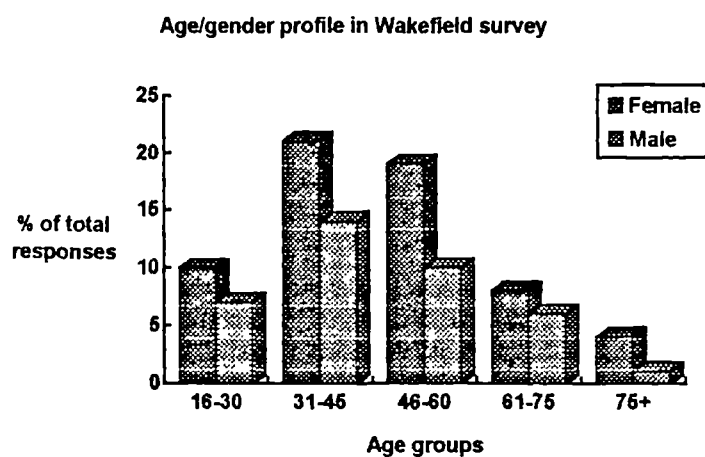
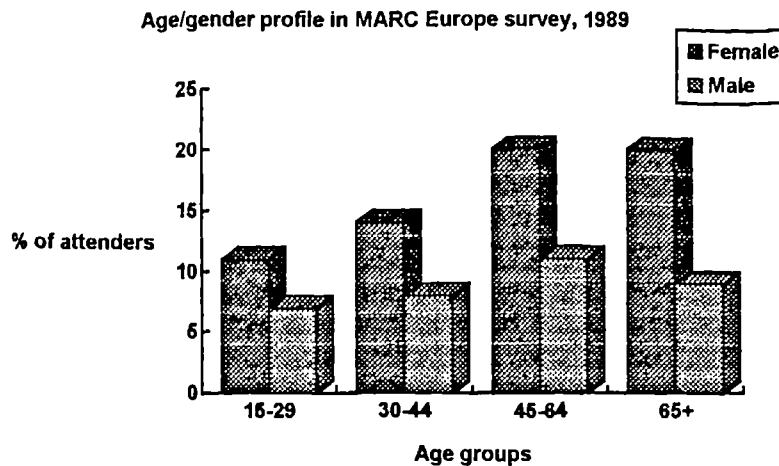


Table 6.4 Age-gender percentages, Anglican churches, MARC Europe, 1989

Age group	15-29	30-44	45-64	65+	
<i>Percentages</i>					<i>Total</i>
Female	11	14	20	20	65
Male	7	8	11	9	35
Totals	18	22	31	30	100

<sup>1</sup> Brierley *Prospects for the Nineties. All England*, p.39



Because different age bands were used this can be no more than an approximate guide to the comparability of the present survey with Anglican churches generally. The Wakefield survey was a little more balanced between men and women than was the case in the MARC Europe survey (across England the female/male ratio was 1.85). Compared with other surveys of Anglican congregations the female/male ratio of 1.65 in the present survey is similar to results obtained in recent years: in the late 1970's the Nationwide Initiative in Evangelism reported the ratio as 1.6, while *Faith in the City* in 1985 gave it as 1.7.<sup>2</sup>

The age breakdown showed that fewer older people answered this survey than were reported as attending in the MARC Europe survey. In the youngest adult age group there was good comparability.

The Wakefield survey was mainly over-represented in the thirties and forties age groups: this may be due to greater willingness to answer the survey, though the high response rate at Christ Church, Billericay suggests that that church, at least, had more middle-aged attenders than Anglican churches generally. The middle age bands were over-represented compared with the general population too: about 25% of the general population was aged between 31 and 45 and 22% between 46 and 60.<sup>3</sup> The over-representation comes about because of the strength of female attendance in those age groups.

<sup>2</sup> Examples from Wakefield *Where are the Men?*, p.4f. Roman Catholic ratios tended to be closer to unity, non-conformist churches tended to have larger ratios.

<sup>3</sup> Comparisons in Brierley *op. cit.*, p.81, Table 30

Question 4 asked how long people had been Christians, giving 'brought up as a Christian' as the first option, recorded in table 6.5 as "raised" for the sake of brevity. A handful of people ticked this option and a specific number of years; these were recorded as raised unless a written comment on the form suggested otherwise. The number of instances of either kind was less than ten.

Table 6.5 Years as a Christian, adults

Years as a Christian	Male	Female	Total	Percentage of adults	Annual conversion rate
Raised	68	136	206	25	-
0-1 Year	6	11	17	2	2%
1-5 Years	36	49	85	10	2½%
6-10 Years	59	74	134	16	3%
11-20 Years	62	97	161	19	2%
20+ Years	74	125	200	24	-
Not a Christian	4	4	8	1	-
Not answered	4	11	15	2	-

This survey assumed that some Christians would regard themselves as brought up as Christians and that they could not remember a time when they had not been Christians. Since the 4 parishes surveyed were all of an evangelical hue it is worth noting that 25% of all the adult attenders saw themselves in this category. Another 24% had been converted more than 20 years previously: long-lasting commitment to the Christian faith is demonstrated by such figures.

The annual conversion rate in the survey has been calculated from the percentage of adults in answering for each length of Christian life. The percentage of adults in the fifth column of table 6.5 has been divided by the number of years in the first column. The percentage in the sixth column has then been given to the nearest half percent.

The average annual conversion rate over 0-20 years is 2.4%, with the variations over time noted in the table. This figure gives a measure of the proportion of newer Christians belonging to a church. It does not in itself indicate the effectiveness of that church in converting people, since it takes no account of transfers subsequent to conversion. If every person in the survey had been converted in the past 20 years the rate would be 5%. The fact that the actual figure is about half this reflects the fact that about half the respondents described themselves as converted in this period. As noted above, the other half were evenly split between those describing themselves as raised as a Christian and those converted more than 20 years ago.

The slightly higher conversion rate during the period 6-10 years may be related to growth patterns in the surveyed churches but it is not significantly different to the other time periods. It may be compared with the rates at which new people without a church background joined Electoral Rolls in Rochester and St Albans, where mean figures of 2.5%, 2.4% and 1.9% were found (see table 2.34). There are differences in the wording of the categories and between a self-administered survey and one completed by church leaders but the comparability of the results is striking. Note that this question takes no account of where the individuals might have been converted.

There was no statistically significant difference in the length of time men and women said they had been a Christian.<sup>4</sup> Men were less likely than women to respond that they had been raised as a Christian; the ratio of women to men in that category was 2.0, compared with 1.6 overall, though again the gender difference was not statistically significant.<sup>5</sup>

It is of interest that the period with the highest rate of conversion taking place (6-10 years ago) saw the least imbalance in the female/male ratio, 1.3 in that period. This would appear to be related to the finding of David Waddell that the female/male ratio comes closer to unity when a church is growing in numbers and not simply replacing those leaving.<sup>6</sup>

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<sup>4</sup>  $\chi^2 = 4.9$ , with 5 degrees of freedom,  $p > 0.05$

<sup>5</sup>  $\chi^2 = 2.8$ , with 1 degree of freedom,  $p > 0.05$

<sup>6</sup> Waddell *Tools for the Task No. 1*, p.36. This is also discussed in Wakefield *Where are the Men?*, p.6f

Question 5 asked for the length of time in attendance at this church:

Table 6.6 Years in present church, adults

Years in this church	Male	Female	Total	% of 0-20+ Years	Annual rate of joining
0-1 Year	31	56	87	13	13%
1-5 Years	94	129	224	34	8½%
6-10 Years	73	108	181	28	5½%
11-20 Years	34	65	100	15	1½%
20+ Years	21	44	65	10	-
Planting Group	16	22	41		
Visitor	14	26	41		
Not answered	5	11	16		

\*Christ Church, Billericay had a further 71 adults (9% of the adults answering 0-20+ Years) attending for 10+ years

There was no significant difference in the length of time men and women had belonged to their present church.<sup>7</sup>

The term 'planting group' was a possible response on the forms given out at recent church plants. It corresponds to the term frequently used in church planting literature for the initial group which forms the new church.

The annual rate of joining was calculated in a similar way to the conversion rate, though as percentages of those adults responding with a specific length of belonging (0-20+ years), rather than of all adults in the survey. This excluded visitors to the church for obvious reasons and also excluded those in planting groups. The reason for excluding the latter group is that they are not new members of the local church. In the survey overall the difference in the percentages would be fairly small, but when looking at an individual church plant to include this group could give an unrealistically high figure for the growth of the plant.

<sup>7</sup>  $\chi^2 = 3.6$ , with 4 degrees of freedom,  $p > 0.05$

The lower annual percentage rate of joining for those with longer attendance in their present church is to be expected since the previous surveys cited in chapter 2 show that substantial numbers also leave churches; the question asked could be answered only by those still attending the same church at the time of the survey. (The figure for 11-20 years is further reduced by those at Christ Church, Billericay. If they answered the question in the same proportions as the other churches then 42 of the 71 would have answered 11-20 years, the percentage of adults would then be 20% and the annual rate of joining 2%.)

In addition, the church plants surveyed had very few attending more than 10 years because the churches have been planted since then! Strictly speaking no-one in the church plants should have given the response 'more than 10 years' to this question; eight people did where they had come from the planting church and regarded the two congregations as one church, and five others did where the plant was into a building with an existing congregation. A large, long established church like Emmanuel, Billericay had 32% in attendance for between 11 and 20 years. This is likely to be more typical of long established churches than the 15% of this survey.

The only period which was directly comparable with the previous studies is for those joining in the preceding year; in the Wakefield survey 13% of the adults giving a specific time had joined in the previous year (it is 12% of all adults in the survey).<sup>8</sup> The rate of Electoral Roll growth in Rochester and St Albans was about 7% per year across the dioceses (see table 2.33); in two instances out of 54 deanery Electoral Rolls grew by more than 10% but as before the parish variation is not generally known. Six examples are given in the Rochester reports citing parish Electoral Roll growth of more than 10%, one being 20%.<sup>9</sup> **The overall rate of gains of the churches in this survey is therefore well above the mean in the other Anglican surveys but within the limits set by known parish rates in those surveys.**

Question 6 asked for reasons for joining this particular congregation. It was possible to give more than one reason, though respondents were not asked to prioritise multiple reasons. The

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<sup>8</sup> There remains the difference between the self-assessment of the present survey and the formal process of joining an Electoral Roll.



percentages in the final column of table 6.7 show that adults were much more likely than the 0-15 years olds to give more than one reason for joining. In a few instances 4 or even 5 reasons were given, though the vast majority kept to one or two reasons.

Table 6.7a Reasons for joining, youth and adults

	Nearest	Friends	Worship	Preaching	Children	Converted	Other	"Total"
Male	3	7	3	1	3	5	17	
Female	11	15	5	1	9	1	37	
0-15's	14	22	8	2	12	6	54	118
% of youth	13%	20%	7%	2%	11%	6%	50%	109%
Male	84	58	98	56	29	56	70	
Female	175	96	134	56	37	65	116	
Adults	260	155	234	114	66	121	186	1136
% of adults	31%	19%	28%	14%	8%	15%	23%	138%

The youth most commonly gave an 'other' reason, which was usually that they had been brought by family members. This answer occurred amongst the adults, as did moving to be near adult children in old age. Some of those recorded as 'other' put answers such as "the Lord led me here" without an indication of how the guidance came. This was also the case in question 8 on reasons for leaving a previous church.

The term 'converted' was used on the questionnaire since the survey was being carried out in evangelical churches where the term was likely to be in general use. It was up to the individual to choose the term. Comparison with other surveys is possible on the basis of looking at those new to a given church at different periods; this analysis is carried out after table 6.14.

<sup>9</sup> *Electoral Roll Change Rochester 1991-2*, p.6f and *Rochester on the Move!*, p.7

It is noteworthy even at this stage of the analysis that **the two most common specific reasons for the adults were nearness of the church and style of worship**. These are quite distinct reasons, since individuals with a desire for a particular brand of worship are often prepared to travel, while others preferred to worship close to home, with much less regard to the style. Further interesting features are shown by cross-tabulating these answers with those of question 8, the reason for leaving a previous church; the analysis is in section 6.4.3.

**Provision for children was not important for many people (8%);** only some people will need to consider this reason but it might have been thought to be more important. It is possible that the provision for children was not very good in the surveyed churches, thus excluding people for whom this was an important consideration. However, most of the churches in the survey did have quite large children's groups running. Furthermore, there were no clear differences in the responses between churches with larger groups and the few with little provision for children. This point is of interest since much energy has gone into reports on ministry amongst children and young people recently.<sup>10</sup> It is explored in the qualitative interviews in Part III.

There were some differences between the reasons given by men and women and these are reasonably significant statistically.<sup>11</sup> As the table of percentages shows, **women were more likely than men to choose their nearest church**, over one third of the women gave this reason. There may be an economic reason: men are still more likely than women to have access to a car. **Men scored higher on the style of worship, converted at this church and particularly on preaching.**

The one reason scored equally by men and women was **friendship**. As was brought out in the later qualitative interviews<sup>12</sup>, this ranged from a general sense of welcome on attending the church initially to looking for Christian fellowship, using family or Kingdom of God language.

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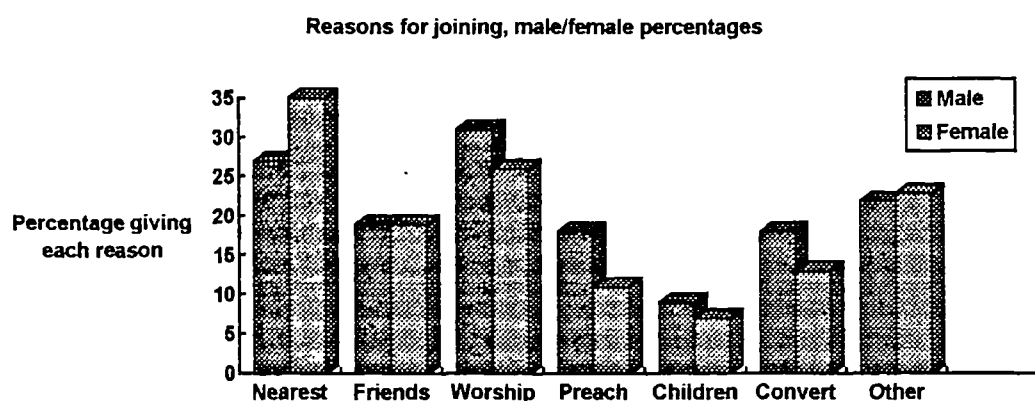
<sup>10</sup> The church plant at St Peter's, Cramlington, described in chapter 4, was planted with 'nearness' and 'provision for children' as the specific reasons they hoped people would join. It is not known how far they have succeeded with the latter reason.

<sup>11</sup>  $\chi^2 = 14.1$ , with 6 degrees of freedom,  $0.05 > p > 0.01$

<sup>12</sup> Chapter 13

Table 6.7b Reasons for joining, male and female, adults

%	Nearest	Friends	Worship	Preaching	Children	Converted	Other
Male	27	19	31	18	9	18	22
Female	35	19	26	11	7	13	23



Question 7 asked about attendance at another church, immediately before the present one, in an attempt to discover rates of transfer growth.

Table 6.8 Immediate previous church attendance, adults

Attended a church immediately				
before this one?	Male	Female	Adults	Percentage
Yes	190	340	534	65%
No	123	167	292	35%

There was no significant gender difference in answering question 7.<sup>13</sup>

To make full use of the answers in assessing rates of transfer growth it has to be cross-tabulated with question 5 on length of attendance at present church; this is to be found in

section 6.4.1 where further comment is made. Of those in the survey nearly two-thirds had previously been in another church. The 35% not in another church immediately previously are, in the Church Growth Movement terms, conversion, restoration or biological growth. Comparable transfer growth figures for Rochester and St Albans were about 40% (table 2.34), suggesting at first glance that the surveyed churches may have a higher proportion of growth by transfer than is generally the case for Anglicans.

However, as hinted in chapter 2, the comparison is not totally straightforward for four main reasons:

1. In the diocesan surveys there was a large percentage of the growth described as “other reasons”. In the case of Rochester, in both years transfer growth was 35% of the total growth and other reasons was 21% of the total growth. In the case of St Albans, transfer growth was 49% of the total and other reasons was 12%.<sup>14</sup> The most common other reason given in all three surveys was “regular members or attenders not previously on Roll”.<sup>15</sup> It is not known how many of these would have attended another church previously but undoubtedly at least some will have done so. The second most common other reason was “those needing to qualify to get married in the church”. This factor will have slightly over-stated the true growth of the churches as such people rarely continue to attend once married.

Taken together these factors mean that the percentage growth which is by transfer is understated in the diocesan surveys. Precisely quantifying the difference is not possible. However, it seems reasonable to suggest that about half the growth found in these surveys was by transfer (in the case of St Albans it was clearly higher than that, in the case of Rochester it may have been a little lower than half).

2. It is also possible that in a self-administered survey respondents were more likely than a third party to regard themselves as moving from another church, just as new attenders frequently regarded themselves as Christians already. If this is so, it would have the effect of making rates of transfer growth lower in the method used in the diocesan surveys and/or

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<sup>13</sup>  $\chi^2 = 3.4$ , with 1 degree of freedom,  $p > 0.05$

<sup>14</sup> These figures are conveniently summarised in table 2.34.

higher in the self-administered survey. To obtain numerical results would require both types of survey to be carried out on the same sample of churches.<sup>16</sup>

3. As will be seen in the answers to question 8 of the present survey the figure of 65% attending another church previously includes the 6% of the adults in the survey who moved church to take part in church planting (table 6.9). Since this is a much higher proportion than would have been the case in the diocesan surveys it is important to remove them before making a comparison. The effect of disregarding this group is to reduce **the proportion attending another church previously to 62%.**

4. It is a possibility that those who join a church by transfer growth are more likely to remain in attendance over a longer period than those who join through conversion or restoration. I am not aware of any research evidence either way on this subject, except for the results presented below in section 6.4.1, p.162, which may suggest that this is **not** the case, i.e. that there is no difference in the subsequent length of commitment between those who join by transfer or by another route.

Comparing results across surveys on all types of growth must therefore be done with caution, and differences of survey method borne in mind. The above exercise suggests that the difference in transfer growth rates between the churches in the Wakefield survey and in the diocesan survey may not be very large (62% compared with perhaps 50% or a little more). Comparisons will be made between the different congregations in the present survey in subsequent chapters.

Questions 8-10 were intended to be answered by all those answering 'yes' to question 7. In fact 98% answered questions 8 and 9, while a few answering 'no' to question 7 answered question 10. This seemed to be people who had attended church in the more distant past, usually as a child, and then had a gap from church attendance. This phenomena is a further

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<sup>15</sup> e.g. Brierley *Rochester on the Move!*, p.10, Table 8

<sup>16</sup> Some indication that this observation is correct is given by the comments of ministers who saw certain individuals as converts when the individuals described themselves as transferring on the survey forms.

illustration of the problems of definition. Fortunately the number of instances is too few to cause much distortion in the results.

Question 8 asked respondents to give one reason for moving church from the selection in the following table.

Table 6.9 Reasons for moving church, adults

Reason for moving	Male	Female	Total	% of movers	% of adults
Moved house	87	179	269	50	33
Unhappy elsewhere	51	63	114	21	14
Involved in church planting	16	35	52	10	6
Other	35	52	87	16	11
Not answered	1	11	12	2	1
Not moved	123	167	292	-	35

Half those moving church did so because of a house move and they made up a third of all adult respondents. Those moving because of a church planting involvement were usually from the planting church, not people transferring from a third congregation. (This is discussed further by cross-tabulating this question with question 9 on previous denomination. See section 6.4.4.)

Men were a little more likely to give the reason of being dissatisfied elsewhere and a little less likely to give the reason for moving as a house move. However, the differences between the answers of the men and women were not statistically significant.<sup>17</sup>

Question 9 asked for the denomination of the church previously attended. Among the 'other' denominations were Congregationalists, Brethren (especially at Cranham Park where a building was acquired from a Brethren congregation which had become very small) and Pentecostal.

<sup>17</sup>  $\chi^2 = 6.0$ , with 3 degrees of freedom,  $p > 0.05$

As was noted in section 4.1 on Springfield church, local circumstances can lead to high numbers transferring in a short period: in this survey, for example, 14 of the 23 adults describing their previous church as "House Church" moved to Christ Church, Billericay when their church moved location to another town. (Since the survey of 1993 at least 6 of the 14 have moved church again, without moving house. It is perhaps a pointer to the fluidity of some church attenders contrasting with the stability of others.)

Table 6.10 Denomination of previous church, adults

Previous denomination	Male	Female	Total	% of movers
Baptist	23	32	55	10
Church of England	116	220	340	64
Free Evangelical	15	28	43	8
House Church	8	15	23	4
Methodist	4	15	19	4
Roman Catholic	3	4	7	1
United Reform	5	5	10	2
Other	14	15	29	5
Not answered	2	6	8	1
Not moved	123	167	292	-

There was no significant gender difference in answering question 9.<sup>18</sup>

The results show that in the Wakefield survey **35% of those moving church are known to have changed denomination**, virtually all from Protestant churches. **The Anglican to non-Anglican ratio is 1.8, a much lower ratio than in the diocesan-wide surveys, where it was 4 or higher.** Again, the lack of parish information in the previous surveys makes a full comparison difficult, but it seems that at least some of the surveyed churches were more likely to gain non-Anglican transfers than is generally the case.

<sup>18</sup>  $\chi^2 = 6.5$ , with 7 degrees of freedom,  $p > 0.05$

Question 10 asked for the frequency of attendance at the previous church:

Table 6.11 Attendance at previous church, adults

	Male	Female	Total	% of movers
Weekly	160	278	442	83%
Fortnightly	10	20	31	6%
Monthly	11	23	34	6%
Rarely	11	17	28	5%
No reply	121	169	291	-

Question 11 asked everyone in the survey for their present frequency of attendance:

Table 6.12 Attendance at present church, all adults

	Male	Female	Total	% of adults
Weekly	254	418	676	81%
Fortnightly	25	34	59	7%
Monthly	12	21	34	4%
Rarely	12	13	26	3%
No reply	8	20	31	4%

There was no significant difference in the replies of men and women.<sup>19</sup>

There was little difference between the past and present frequencies of attendance, with 83% regarding their previous attendance as weekly and 81% in the present church; the people without a previous church are a little less likely to regard their attendance as weekly.

A comparison can be made by calculating a weekly attendance rate, by weighting the responses as weekly = 1, fortnightly = 0.5, monthly = 0.25, rarely = 0.125. On this basis,

<sup>19</sup> For question 10,  $\chi^2 = 0.43$ , with 3 degrees of freedom,  $p > 0.05$ ; for question 11,  $\chi^2 = 1.2$ , with 3 degrees of freedom,  $p > 0.05$



across the survey the weekly attendance rate at a previous church was 88%, and at the present church 86%.<sup>20</sup>

Although the groups were obtained in very different ways these results are close to the results of Finney's work on new attenders: in his survey 85% attended at least once a week, and a further 14% less than once a week, but at least once a month.<sup>21</sup> The equivalent figures from the present survey are 81% and 11%; these are lowered slightly by the inclusion of visitors and are virtually identical with Finney's results if visitors are excluded. This may mean that attendance rates do not vary greatly once people have committed themselves or that those in the present survey have retained their initial enthusiasm for church attendance.

#### 6.4 Some cross-tabulations of results

Most research on church growth has been limited to gaining information from church leaders, while surveys of individuals are more usually concerned to ask about their beliefs and attitudes. The analysis presented here, and in the subsequent chapters, is therefore relatively new, in that the Wakefield survey combined questions relating to church growth and some simple questions about motivations.

As will be seen, there are some striking and clear results, especially in the different motivations for finding a church between those who have attended a church immediately prior to joining a new church and those who come in new or return after a longer gap. It was this result which was a prime reason for the qualitative interviews undertaken for the concluding Part III of the thesis.

For the ten questions analysed there are 45 possible two-way cross-tabulations. A total of these 22 were chosen as being of especial interest.

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<sup>20</sup> Commenting on this John Preston wrote, "they may like it more, but they don't come more frequently!" (letter of 27/5/95). It would be possible to check any alterations in frequency of attendance of those moving church.

<sup>21</sup> Finney *op. cit.*, p.74, Fig.18

All nine cross-tabulations involving question 2 on age were selected in order to exclude the 0-15 year olds from the main analysis.<sup>22</sup> This is made explicit in tables 6.1-3 on the age-gender breakdown and in table 6.7 on the reasons for joining the present church. In effect those cross-tabulations have been discussed in the previous section.

The eight cross-tabulations of questions 4-11 with gender were carried out and again the results included in the analysis described in section 6.3, mostly indicating little difference between the answers given by men and women.

A further five cross-tabulations were selected for their possible relationship to previous measurements of types of growth, motivations for joining and leaving and possible insights into church planting. (In fact these were three-way cross-tabulations, since the 0-15 year olds had to be excluded.) In addition, some three-way cross-tabulations<sup>23</sup> were carried out to test more detailed hypotheses; these are dealt with in sections 6.4.3 and 6.4.4.

#### 6.4.1 Rates of types of growth

The discussion of question 5 above noted that the churches in the Wakefield survey had had a higher overall growth rate in the previous year than the averages found in the diocesan surveys. Discussion of individual congregations will show that this was not linked to the growth at church plants at the time of the survey. The second way of comparing growth is through the profile of types of growth at a given period; this is the approach of the present section.

In table 6.13 the results of two cross-tabulations are combined for easy comparison. Questions 6 and 7 are cross-tabulated with question 5, in order to examine any changes over time in the rates of conversion growth and transfer growth. The column in the table headed 'total new' is also given in table 6.6 above, and repeated here for convenience.

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<sup>22</sup> The discussion of questions 1 and 2 points out that the 0-15 year olds would not be expected to be fully represented in a survey of this type. In addition, only some churches had any forms returned by 0-15 year olds.

<sup>23</sup> Again, in practice age was included, making these four-way cross-tabulations, though no age analysis was carried out beyond excluding the 0-15 year olds

Table 6.13 New attenders by length of present church attendance (Q. 5, 6(Converted), and 7)

	Converted here (Q.6)	No previous church (Q.7 no)	Transfers (Q.7 yes)	Total new (Q. 5)
0-1 Year	4	26	61	87
1-5 Years	35	66	158	224
6-10 Years	40	67	114	181
11-20 Years	23	40	60	100
20+ Years	7	21	44	65
10+ Years (BC)	9	32	40	71
Planting Group	1	4	37	41

BC in this and subsequent tables refers to responses at Christ Church, Billericay

Table 6.5 above enabled the calculation of the rate of conversion of the individuals in the survey. Table 6.13 gives the number of conversions and of all new people joining the churches in the survey. Those describing themselves as converted are included in those with no previous church; for example, in the year before the survey 26 people with no immediate previous church connection joined these churches, of whom 4 described themselves as converts. In the usual church growth terminology, this would imply restoration growth of 22 people in that year. An additional column in table 6.14 gives this percentage for each period of time.

For periods over one year the rates are not strictly comparable with the previous surveys because no account can be taken of those leaving the church. However, an approximate comparison can be made by expressing the types of growth as percentages of those new in a given period. This provides some comparison of the composition of types of growth across the surveys, though not of the rate of growth.

Table 6.14 Annual rates of growth by length of present church attendance, as a proportion of total growth

Percentages of total growth	Conversion growth	Other new attenders	All with no previous church	Transfer growth	Total new (numbers)
0-1 Year	5%	25%	30%	70%	87
1-5 Years	16%	13%	29%	71%	224
6-10 Years	22%	15%	37%	63%	181
11-20 Years	23%	17%	40%	60%	100
20+ Years	11%	21%	32%	68%	65
10+ Years (BC)	13%	32%	45%	55%	71
Planting Group	2%	8%	10%	90%	41
Average rates (excluding planting groups)	16%	18%	34%	66%	728

Comments on tables 6.13 and 6.14:

1. Of those who have had no attendance at a previous church only a proportion describe themselves as converts: in part this is because those growing up in one church (biological growth) will be included in this total. In addition, it includes those who are renewed in faith after an absence from church attendance. It also reflects on the ways in which spiritual journeys are described: as noted in the Introduction, Finney's research found about 38% of those making important ecclesiastical commitments describing their faith as a first time experience, and few used the term converted.<sup>24</sup>

For those new in the preceding year the rate can be expressed as a percentage of the total 'membership', it is 3.4%. The proportion of new people is comparable with the diocesan figures, in R 92 it was 3.2%, in R 93 2.9% and in A 92 2.6% (these percentages are the sum of conversion growth and biological growth<sup>25</sup> in table 2.34). This implies that **the surveyed churches were gaining new attenders (who weren't transferring church) at a healthy level, though not a startlingly high one.**

<sup>24</sup> Finney *op. cit.*, p.22f and p.19

2. The overall level of transfer growth seems high (a mean of 66% when visitors and those not answering question 5 are taken out) in comparison to the rates for other Anglican churches, which were 35% in Rochester and 49% in St Albans (see table 2.34). However, the reasons for believing that this is an exaggeration of the differences are given in the discussion of question 7 above.

By using the ratio of Anglican to non-Anglican transfers (see table 6.10) we find that the mean rate of Anglican transfers is 43% of the total growth, and for non-Anglican transfers is 23%. This suggests that the rate of non-Anglican transfers accounts for the high transfer growth rate in the surveyed churches.

More detailed discussion on the types of transfer growth is given below in section 6.4.4 on denominational fluidity.

3. The need to separate the 10+ years figure for Christ Church, Billericay highlights the fact of parish variation. Where possible this is examined in chapters 7 to 10 for evidence which may help to elucidate other points.
4. The mean rates of transfer growth and of people with no previous church do not seem to vary greatly with time. For the transfer growth a  $\chi^2$  test on the variation over time gives  $\chi^2 = 5.3$ . With 4 degrees of freedom  $p > 0.05$ , so that **there is no statistically significant variation in the rate of transfer growth over time**. The much lower conversion growth rate in the preceding year may mean a drop in the number of converts or reflect on their nervousness in completing the survey form.
5. There is some slight support for the notion of a link between higher rates of conversion and lower rates of transfer growth, as suggested by some of the results in chapters 2 and 3. In the periods 6-10 years ago and 11-20 years prior to this survey there were the highest rates of conversion growth and lowest rates of transfer growth. However, further research would be needed to test this idea.

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<sup>25</sup> 'others' in the diocesan surveys is thought to include many who transferred but it has not been added to any specific category in the discussion here

#### 6.4.2 Reasons for leaving a church

As noted in chapter 1, section 1.2.1, an important motivation originally for this thesis was to test the proposition that church plants might grow disproportionately by transfer growth. The discussion in the previous section suggests that transfer growth may have been high in the surveyed churches: was it because of church planting per se or because of other factors?

This is examined in this chapter in two ways:

first, from the stated reason for leaving a previous church;

secondly, from the stated reason(s) for joining the present church.<sup>26</sup>

Question 5 on length of present church membership and question 8 on the reason for leaving a previous church were cross-tabulated to test for variations over time. Table 6.15 records the results:

Table 6.15 Reason for leaving previous church, by length of present church attendance

	Moved	Unhappy	C.P.	Other	No reply	Total
0-1 Year	25	16	7	9	30	87
1-5 Years	70	43	10	36	65	224
6-10 Years	49	31	9	23	69	181
11-20 Years	37	12	1	8	42	100
20+ Years	39	4	0	2	20	65
10+ Years (BC)	35	1	0	1	34	71
Planting Group	10	1	25	1	4	41
Visitor	2	4	0	5	30	41
No reply to Q.5	2	2	0	2	10	16
Totals	269	114	52	87	304	826

<sup>26</sup> It is also examined by investigating the individual congregations in the subsequent chapters.

The variations over time in the stated reasons for leaving were tested for significance by calculating the “expected” values in table 6.16<sup>27</sup>:

Table 6.16 “Expected” values of stated reason for leaving previous church, by length of present church attendance

	Moved	Unhappy	C.P.	Other	Total
0-1 Year	29	14	4	10	57
1-5 Years	81	39	10	29	159
6-10 Years	57	28	7	20	112
11-20 Years	30	14	4	10	58
20+ Years	23	11	3	8	45
Totals	220	106	27	78	431

$\chi^2 = 36.9$  with 12 degrees of freedom,  $p < 10^{-3}$  so the time variations are statistically very significant. The variations over time are highlighted in table 6.17 by calculating each reason as a percentage of those transferring in each period.

Table 6.17 Reason for leaving previous church, by length of present church attendance, as a percentage of those giving a reason for transferring in each period

	Moved	Unhappy	C.P.	Other	Total
0-1 Year	44%	28%	12%	16%	57
1-5 Years	44%	27%	6%	23%	159
6-10 Years	44%	28%	8%	21%	112
11-20 Years	64%	21%	2%	14%	58
20+ Years	87%	9%	0%	4%	45
Mean proportions	51%	25%	6%	18%	431

As expected, the proportions in church planting are variable because of the more recent activity of this kind (the one person in attendance for 11-20 years had been a member of the Brethren church whose premises were taken over by Moor Lane church, Cranham Park; strictly, this was an ‘incorrect’ answer!).

<sup>27</sup> This table is included to demonstrate the statistical method used; the equivalent tables necessary for the calculations in subsequent cross-tabulations are not shown.

Most of the significant variation is in the other possible answers: **the reduction in the proportion transferring because of a house move is especially noteworthy, the level for those attending 0-10 years is only half that of those attending 20+ years.** The drop is probably exaggerated by the fact that those who joined 20+ years ago for reasons of unhappiness with their church are likely to have moved on again (a familiar situation in pastoral work) but the size of the observed difference may mean it does reflect a real change with time. It is in accord with other evidence of denominational fluidity in the early 1990's<sup>28</sup>, though the variation between the congregations in the survey is also of interest.

**Corresponding to the drop in the proportion moving church because of a house move is the increase in those moving church because of dissatisfaction.** Those attending in the last 10 years were three times more likely to have joined because of dissatisfaction than those joining 20+ years ago; this is likely to be an exaggeration of the change for the reasons noted in the previous paragraph, but the steady figure of about 28% over the three most recent successive periods implies a real change. As Finney puts it "the overall picture is of a highly mobile and rather "choosy" clientele."<sup>29</sup> The likely areas of dissatisfaction are suggested by the reasons given for joining the present church and this is analysed in section 6.4.3.

There is also an increase in those giving 'other' reasons among the more recent joiners. Some of this may be due to the increasing level of "choosiness" amongst church attenders; another factor noted in some answers was joining family or friends. In both cases this response was given without explicitly stating dissatisfaction with the previous church.

#### 6.4.3 Reasons for joining the present church

Since it proved of interest to examine the time variations of motivations for leaving the same approach was used on motivations for joining, by cross-tabulating question 5 and question 6 on the reasons for joining the present church. The results for adults are in table 6.18 which follows:

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<sup>28</sup> For example, Finney *op. cit.*, p.80 on fluidity during a period of spiritual commitment. The comment in the text may seem very restrained, but reflected the fact that there is little or no longitudinal data on levels of denominational fluidity.

<sup>29</sup> *ibid.*, p.81



Table 6.18 Reasons for joining by length of present church attendance

Years in this church	nearest	friends	worship	preaching	children	converted	other reason	Total new
0-1 Year	35	16	27	12	13	4	21	87
1-5 Years	54	62	85	43	16	35	48	224
6-10 Years	35	34	58	24	14	40	34	181
11-20 Years	31	11	28	17	10	23	27	100
20+ Years	37	6	11	7	1	7	10	65
10+ Years (BC)	47	6	10	1	6	9	11	71
Planting Group	14	4	8	4	3	1	14	41
Visitor	3	12	4	2	1	0	19	41
Not answered	4	4	3	4	2	2	2	16
Totals (Q.6)	260	155	234	114	66	121	186	826

The reasons given have been calculated as percentages of those joining in the various periods in table 6.19 that follows:

Table 6.19 Reasons for joining by length of present church attendance, as a proportion of joiners in each period

Years in this church	nearest	friends	worship	preaching	children	converted	other reason	Total reasons
0-1 Year	40%	18%	31%	14%	15%	5%	24%	147%
1-5 Years	24%	28%	38%	19%	7%	16%	21%	156%
6-10 Years	19%	19%	32%	13%	8%	22%	19%	132%
11-20 Years	31%	11%	28%	17%	10%	23%	27%	147%
20+ Years	57%	9%	17%	11%	2%	11%	15%	114%
Mean %	31%	19%	28%	14%	8%	15%	23%	138%

Among those joining 20+ years ago we find that joining the nearest church was by far the most common reason given. On average only 1 in 7 (that is the meaning of the figure 114% in the final column) in the group joining then gave a second reason, compared with more than 1 in 3 in the survey as a whole. Perhaps people who joined their present church that long ago were less likely to remember their motivations for joining!

**The decline in 'nearness' as a reason for joining is marked** and one would suspect it to be associated with the increasing numbers changing church because of dissatisfaction. At the same time **there is an increase in the interest in worship**. This correlates neatly with the greater attention paid to styles of worship generally, whether of the informal type associated with house churches and other evangelical groups, or the liturgical revision in the Church of England since the mid-1970's.

**There is also an increasing tendency to join because of friendships**; note that this does not correlate with the proportions being converted: the highest conversion rate, 23%, is amongst those joining 11-20 years ago, with a 'friendship rate' of 11%. Of those joining 1-5 years ago the conversion rate is 16%, with a friendship rate of 28%.

There appears to be a reversal of these trends among those joining in the year preceding the survey: it is not known if this is due to the method of obtaining survey material or part of a longer term shift in the patterns of joining these churches.

To check the possibility that the variations in table 6.19 came about because of the increased numbers moving church out of dissatisfaction those who moved church because of moving house were selected. Their rates of response to 'nearest church' and 'style of worship' were then calculated over time and recorded in table 6.20.<sup>30</sup> The percentages are of the number moving house in each period, given in the final column.

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<sup>30</sup> This involved cross-tabulating questions 5, 6 and 8, as well as question 2 for the ages

Table 6.20 Some reasons those moving house joined a new church, by length of present church attendance

Years in this church	nearest	% of movers	worship	% of movers	number moving house
0-1 Year	12	48%	6	24%	25
1-5 Years	28	40%	28	40%	70
6-10 Years	14	29%	19	39%	49
11-20 Years	15	41%	15	41%	37
20+ Years	26	67%	8	21%	39
10+ Years (BC)	31	89%	6	17%	35
Totals/Average	126	49%	82	32%	255

$$\chi^2 = 9.9, \text{ with 4 degrees of freedom, } 0.05 > p > 0.01$$

The  $\chi^2$  test was used to test the hypothesis that there was a significant change in the reasons for joining amongst this group over time. Those joining Christ Church, Billericay more than 10 years ago were not included in this calculation since it is not in the same format as the other results.

The  $\chi^2$  value means that there is some statistical significance in the time variation of the reasons for joining a new church, even for those moving house. However, it is not at the same level of significance as results discussed earlier and is mainly due to the different pattern of choice between those joining less and more 20 years previously, as can be seen from the percentage figures. **Choosing the nearest church has become less important than formerly, while style of worship has become more important even for the group of people moving house.** This would seem to be a symptom of increased social mobility and the use of cars over that time; the greater proportion of women choosing their nearest church<sup>31</sup> also points in the same direction, as more men have ready access to cars.

This change is illustrated in the following graph:

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<sup>31</sup> Table 6.7b

As would have been expected from the preceding results the variations in reasons for joining compared with reasons for leaving is very significant. Expressing the results as percentages of those leaving for each reason as found from Q.8 leads to table 6.22:

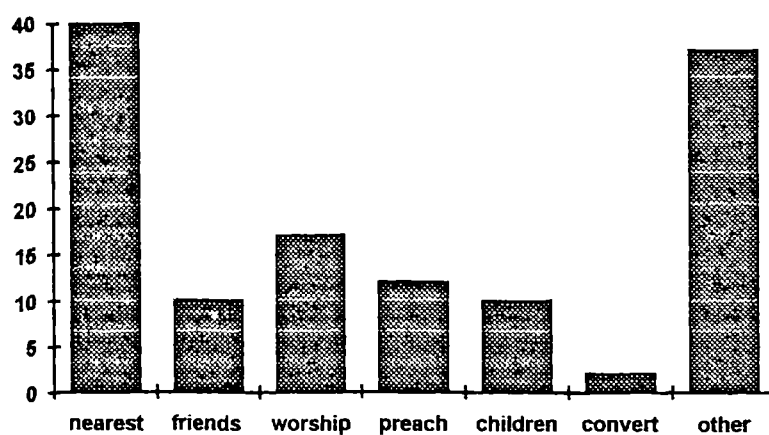
Table 6.22 Reasons for leaving compared with reasons for joining as percentages of those leaving for a given reason

%s add this way →

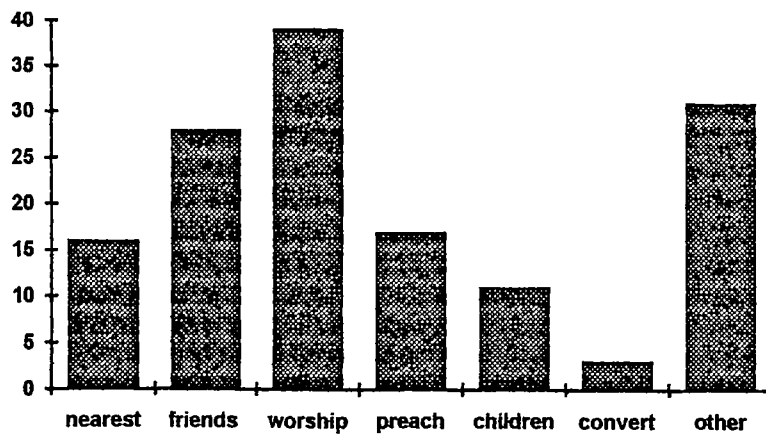
Percentages	nearest	friends	worship	preaching	children	converted	other	totals
Moved house	50	13	32	14	7	4	18	138
Unhappy	11	20	54	37	11	5	24	162
Church planting	40	10	17	12	10	2	37	127
Other	16	28	39	17	11	3	31	145
Not replied	26	23	14	5	6	33	21	128
Mean	31	18	29	14	8	14	22	137

The differences are shown in the following series of graphs, one for each reason for leaving. The scales are the percentages from table 6.22. This provides a visual record of the 'profile' of each group and what it might be looking for in a church.

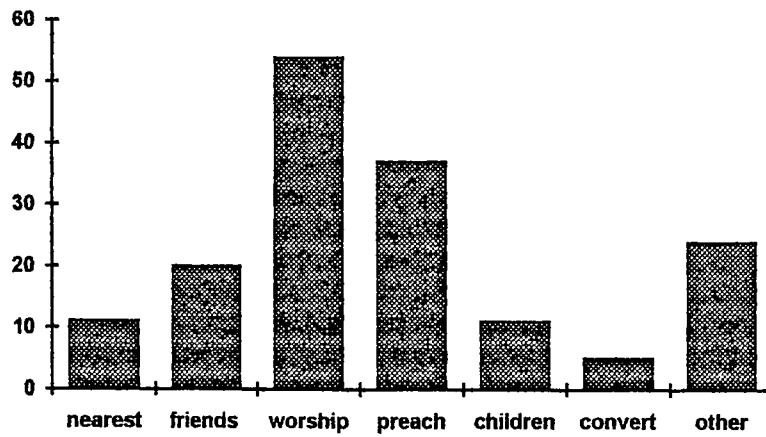
Church planting:



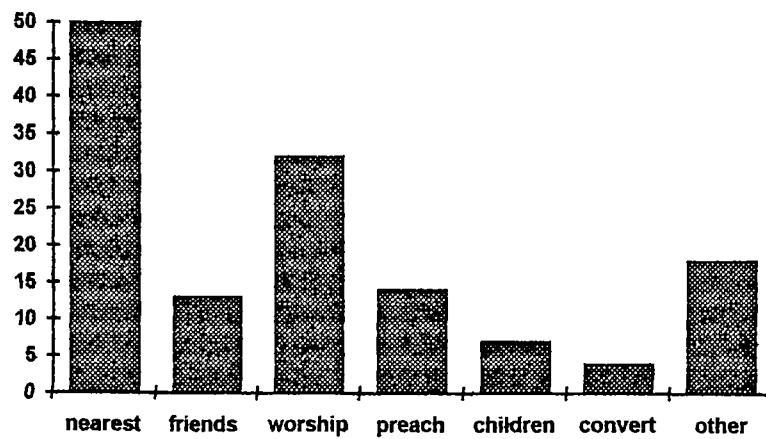
Other reasons:



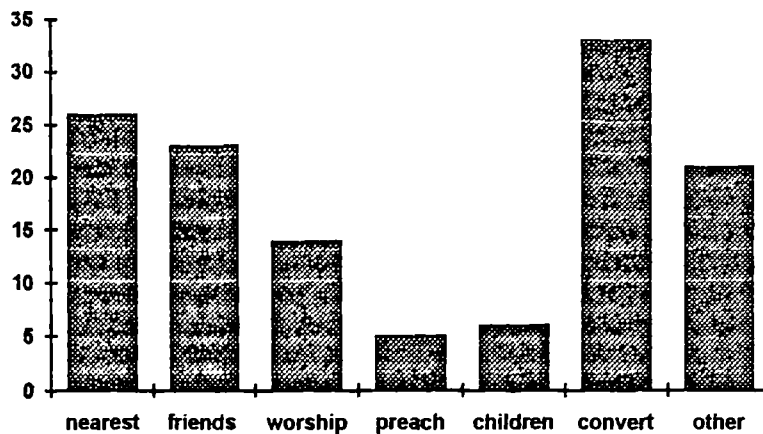
Unhappy at previous church:



Moved house:



Not replied/no previous church



Comments on the profiles illustrated in the graphs:

1. Those who left one church to be involved in **church planting** mainly looked for a **local church** (40%) or gave the reason as 'other' (37%); in many cases this 'other' reason was specified on the questionnaire as church planting. This is encouraging to those who see church planting as a means to bringing church communities into fairly small local districts: these church members were willing to join a local church as a means to church planting. It is noteworthy that, of all those transferring, this group had least concern for the style of worship, preaching and friendships.

2. Those who gave **other** reasons for leaving had a similar profile to those leaving because of dissatisfaction, suggesting that this group may in fact contain many who were dissatisfied elsewhere but felt unable to give that reason baldly. The main differences to the group of those dissatisfied were that in this group friendship was more important (28% compared with 20%), while preaching was much less important (17% compared with 37%). Both groups scored highest on style of worship, while choosing the nearest church was very much less important.

3. More than half (54%) those dissatisfied with their previous church chose their new church for its style of worship and nearly 2 out of 5 (37%) for its preaching. Conversely, nearness was not an important consideration (only 11% gave this reason). In addition, this group gave more reasons for joining than any other group, the percentage of 162% means that

more than 3 out of 5 in this group gave 2 reasons for joining. This is suggestive of strong views.

4. The contrast with those **moving house** is marked: half of this group (50%) chose their nearest church. Nonetheless, worship was still important, being the next largest specific reason for this group (32%). As noted in table 6.20 and the discussion following, there is some evidence of a shift from choosing the nearest church to a greater concern for the style of worship.

5. Nearly all those **not replying** to question 8 were the people who had not immediately attended another church (292 out of 304). Their profile of reasons for joining was very different: the largest reason was conversion at that church (33%), where, as expected, this reason scored very low (<4%) for those transferring church. **Apart from conversion, nearness (26%) and friends (23%) were the most important factors.**

Style of worship (14%) and preaching (5%) were very much less important for this group than for those transferring. The 31% giving 'other' reasons included those who had grown up within that church, biological growth in the terminology of church growth. Just over 1 in 4 gave more than one reason for joining.

Overall, these responses seem to bear out the importance of having churches close to where people live: those not previously in attendance regarded nearness as a major consideration. This also has the benefit of helping to retain people who move house.

The relative importance of friendship is also borne out in other studies on new attenders: in Finney's survey 15% of men and 24% of women said friends were the main factor leading to faith and about 40% of people said it was a supporting factor.<sup>32</sup> Research in Germany, Austria and Switzerland found that 76% cited friends or relations as major influences in commitment to Christ and to the church.<sup>33</sup>

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<sup>32</sup> Finney *op. cit.*, p.43

<sup>33</sup> C. Schwarz "Need Orientated Evangelism" *Church Growth Digest* 17.4, 1996, p.10. Table 1.

#### 6.4.4 Denominational fluidity and related comparisons

Attention has been drawn to denominational fluidity in all the surveys discussed and the high rate in this survey noted (see section 6.4.1 on question 9). Table 6.23 records the full denominational breakdown compared with the reasons for leaving (obtained by cross-tabulating questions 8 and 9) and it is followed by table 6.24, a simplified version necessary for the  $\chi^2$  test, since some of the values in the full table would be too small for the  $\chi^2$  test to be carried out.

Table 6.23 Reasons for leaving compared with previous denomination

	Bapt.	CoE	Free Ev.	Ho. Ch.	Meth.	RC	URC	Other	None	Totals
Moved house	26	192	15	7	12	1	3	8	5	264
Unhappy	20	49	15	8	3	0	5	10	4	110
Ch. planting	1	48	1	0	0	0	0	2	0	52
Other	6	42	12	7	2	3	1	9	3	82
Not answered	2	7	0	1	2	3	1	0	288	300
Totals	55	338	43	23	19	7	10	29	300	824

The above table can be simplified to show the difference in motivations for leaving the previous church between those previously at Anglican and non-Anglican churches. In this table the percentages are summed down each column.

Table 6.24 Reasons for leaving compared with previous denomination, Anglican or non-Anglican

	CoE		Others		Totals
Moved house	192	58%	72	41%	264
Unhappy	49	15%	61	34%	110
Ch. planting	48	15%	4	2%	52
Other	42	13%	40	23%	82
Totals	331	100%	177	100%	508

$\chi^2 = 54.4$ , with 3 degrees of freedom,  $p < 10^{-11}$



The  $\chi^2$  test is hardly needed to show the clearest differences: the main reason Anglicans moved church was because of a house move, 58% of all Anglican moves, compared with 41% of non-Anglican moves.<sup>34</sup> Indeed, the Anglican figure is about 68% if the transfers for involvement in church planting are excluded.

As might be expected, those moving from a non-Anglican church are far more likely to be moving because of dissatisfaction with their present church than Anglicans moving to another Anglican church. 34% of the non-Anglicans moved for this reason, only 15% of the Anglicans, or 17% disregarding the church planting reason. This can not be taken to imply that Anglicans are less likely to change denomination because of dissatisfaction since only Anglican churches were surveyed: how many former Anglicans were in other denominations was not ascertained.

This table also shows that very few (four) people transferred denomination to be involved in church planting. What has happened is that church planting teams have been formed from one church, with people transferring from other churches subsequently.

The difference in reasons for transferring church is shown clearly in the grid used to analyse previous surveys. The 'dissatisfied' and 'other' reasons are summed and church planting has been disregarded:

Table 6.25 Types of transfer growth, adults

	same denomination	changed denomination	totals
<b>moved house</b>	192	72	264
<b>did not move house</b>	91	101	192
<b>totals</b>	283	173	456

It is not possible to calculate these as percentages of total growth but table 6.26 records these values as percentages of all adults in the survey:

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<sup>34</sup> The assumption has been made that most people do not move house in order to move church!

Table 6.26 Types of transfer growth, proportion of all adults

	same denomination	changed denomination	totals
moved house	23%	9%	32%
did not move house	11%	12%	23%
totals	34%	21%	55%

The overall percentage of 55% is lower than those answering 'yes' to question 7 (65%), mainly because of the exclusion of those church planting (6%). The remaining difference is because of those not answering all the necessary questions. Results for individual congregations can be compared with these figures.

These results were broken down further by cross-tabulation with Question 5 in order to examine annual rates of transfer and to test for changes over time. Because the differences between Anglican and non-Anglican transfers have already been noted these were recorded in separate tables to see if the increase in transfers for dissatisfaction was due to those changing denomination. Only those forms with a definite response in all relevant questions have been included and as before the 0-15 year old age group has been excluded.

Table 6.27 Reasons for leaving over time, Anglicans

Years in this church	Unhappy (1)	Moved house (2)	Ratio (1) to (2)	Church planting	Other	Total	Ratio of Ang. to non-Ang.
0-1 Year	11	11	1	6	6	34	1.8
1-5 Years	15	38	0.39	9	20	82	1.2
6-10 Years	14	32	0.44	9	7	62	1.3
11-20 Years	2	30	0.07	0	5	37	2.2
20+ Years	3	33	0.09	0	1	37	4.6
Planting Group	0	8	0	23	0	31	6.2
Totals	45	152	0.30	47	39	283	1.7

Table 6.28 Reasons for leaving over time, non-Anglicans

Years in this church	Unhappy (1)	Moved house (2)	Ratio (1) to (2)	Church planting	Other	Total
0-1 Year	5	11	0.45	1	2	19
1-5 Years	26	28	0.93	0	13	67
6-10 Years	17	16	1.06	0	15	48
11-20 Years	8	6	1.33	1	2	17
20+ Years	1	6	0.17	0	1	8
Planting Group	0	2	0	2	1	5
Totals	57	69	0.83	4	34	164

Comments on tables 6.27 and 28:

1. The final column of table 6.27 gives the ratio of Anglicans to non-Anglicans transferring in over time. For those joining 20+ years the ratio was 4.6, very much in line with the Anglican surveys in chapter 2 (in Rochester 4.8 in 1992 and 4.0 in 1993<sup>35</sup> and in St Albans in 1992 it was 6.0<sup>36</sup>). However, subsequently this ratio plummeted, reaching 1.2 for those joining 1-5 years previously. Clearly, at least some of the congregations in the survey gained many more non-Anglicans in the period 0-10 years previously than is generally the case.
2. The ratio of those joining out of dissatisfaction to those moving house is higher for non-Anglicans as noted above.

These tables also show that **dissatisfaction as a reason for leaving has grown in recent years amongst Anglicans**, with the ratio less than one tenth 10+ years previously and rising to over 0.4 for 1-10 years previously. The figure of one for 0-1 year ago can not be taken as significant on its own.

<sup>35</sup> section 2.1.1

<sup>36</sup> section 2.2.1

It seems that dissatisfaction with a previous church has grown as greater weight has been placed on worship as a reason for joining. As noted in the Introduction, the Charismatic Movement, which influenced all the churches in the study, has emphasized a supernaturalist stance over against the secularising trends in society, and in turn raised expectations about worship.

The ratio of dissatisfaction to moving house amongst non-Anglicans does not have such an obvious pattern over time. On the small numbers available it seems that moving because of dissatisfaction has increased from 20+ years ago, though the rate drops from the period 11-20 years ago to more recent levels. A larger sample would be needed to elucidate this point.

3. Those in **planting groups** are essentially from the (Anglican) planting churches: it is noticeable that **none of these people expressed dissatisfaction with their previous church**. It seems that 8 Anglicans and 2 non-Anglicans were immediately involved in church planting groups on moving house. It is not known if this was a motive for moving house or whether knowledge of a forthcoming plant led to this choice of church.

Assuming the questions have been answered correctly (this was a potential area for confusion!) then 24 Anglicans and 2 non-Anglicans left their previous church specifically to be involved in church planting. This survey does not permit further knowledge of the full story in such cases; it is likely from experience elsewhere that most of these people were from the planting church, an inference supported by the low rate of transfer across denominations.

It is possible to calculate transfer growth rates as a proportion of the total membership for the preceding year using the information in tables 6.27 and 28. Table 6.29 gives the transfer growth rates:

Table 6.29 Types of transfer growth, all churches in the year preceding the survey

	same denomination	changed denomination	totals
moved house	1.3%	1.3%	2.7%
did not move house	2.1%	0.8%	2.9%
totals	3.4%	2.2%	5.6%

The totals in the last row of table 6.29 can be compared with the rates found in the diocesan surveys: as previously discussed the overall rate of transfer growth appears higher in this survey, 5.6% of the attenders per year compared with 2.3% to 3.3% in the diocesan rates, though these may be understated. The Anglican rate is somewhat higher in this survey, 3.4% compared with between 1.8% and 2.8%.

The difference is more marked when examining those changing denomination: in the Wakefield survey it was 2.2% compared with 0.5% in the diocesan surveys. **This measure of growth confirms the unusually high rate of denominational transfer in the surveyed churches.**

### 6.5 Summary of main findings

It must be remembered that these findings relate to the limited number of churches in the Wakefield survey and in various respects are different to the generality of results from the dioceses studied in chapter 2.

1. Compared with Anglicans generally, the survey is slightly over-represented in thirties and forties age groups and under-represented in older age groups (Q.2)

2. The gender split in the survey is similar to previous surveys of Anglican congregations(Q.1). Somewhat surprisingly there were virtually no differences in the answers given by men and women, except for some small differences in the reasons given for joining a church. (Q.6)
3. The conversion rate is 2.4% per year, similar to other Anglican surveys; one quarter said they had been raised as a Christian and did not state a time when they had been converted (Q.4).
4. In the year preceding the survey the overall rate of growth was 13% of those attending, considerably higher than the mean in other Anglican surveys (Q.5). About a quarter of this growth came from people describing themselves as new converts (Q.5,6 and 7).
5. People chose new churches most commonly because it was the nearest or by its style of worship, with a slight tendency for women to emphasize 'nearest' and men the 'style of worship' (Q.6).
6. Relatively few people put a high priority on the provision for children (Q.6)
7. Just over six out of ten had attended another church immediately before their present church, a figure higher than previous surveys had found. (Q.7)
8. Many people changed denomination, 177 or 19% of the total number surveyed, 35% of those transferring church (Q.9), partly accounting for the high transfer growth rate. This was especially marked in the period 1-10 years previously (Q.5, 8 and 9, table 6.27) and showed far greater denominational fluidity than the results found in the other Anglican surveys.
9. The overall rate of transfer growth had not changed significantly over time, but in more recent years there was a marked increase in transfers because of dissatisfaction with a previous church (Q.5 and 8).

10. The overall increase in dissatisfaction occurred because of changes in Anglican reasons for leaving a previous church (Q.5, 8 and 9, table 6.27).
11. Turning to reasons for joining, the proportion choosing the nearest church had declined more recently, while the proportion joining because of the style of worship and because of friendships had increased (Q.5 and 6), supporting Finney's description of a more choosy clientele.
12. This pattern of change in the reasons for choice of a new church is true even for those moving house, though not as pronounced as in the survey as a whole (Q.5, 6 and 8); they tended to be looking for the nearest church.
13. Those leaving one church to be involved with church planting mainly looked for a local church (Q.6 and 8)
14. Those in planting groups were not dissatisfied with their previous church (Q.5 and 8, table 6.27).
15. Those dissatisfied with their previous church were especially interested in worship and preaching (Q.6 and 8).
16. New attenders found nearness and friendships more important (Q.6 and 8).
17. The value of churches in local neighbourhoods is borne out by the Wakefield survey.
18. Rates of transfer growth in church plants and long established congregations have to be compared after analysing the results of individual parishes and congregations.

The next four chapters describe the results in the four parishes surveyed, and in chapter 11 comparisons are made of the congregational similarities and differences.

## Chapter Seven

### Billericay and Little Burstead

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## 7.1 Brief parish history

This parish was selected both as one of the largest in the diocese and one which has tried church planting in the recent past. Being the parish the author is working in also made it possible to find out details more easily.

The Romans had a camp at Billericay but the Saxons established themselves nearby at Great Burstead, and it was there that the first known church was built in the area.<sup>1</sup> In 1342 a chantry chapel was built on the present site of St Mary Magdalen in Billericay High Street. In the reign of Edward VI it was suppressed as a chantry, but bought by the inhabitants of Billericay, becoming a Chapel-of-Ease. It remained part of the parish of Great Burstead during this time. In 1844, by an order in Council, the district boundaries of "The Chapelry District of Billericay" were defined and a new parish formed in 1860.

Billericay remained a fairly small community until after the Second World War. Even by 1930 the parish boundaries did not reflect the distribution of population: the population was said to be 1,500, but additionally, the "greater part of Mountnessing and Buttsbury are within a mile".<sup>2</sup>

Large scale building occurred in the town during the 1950's and 60's. At this period new churches were formed and existing ones grew. For example, Christ Church moved from a mission hall into a new building in 1965. Billericay Baptist church was formed in 1964. The Methodist church went from 130 members in 1960 to 349 by 1970.<sup>3</sup>

An Anglican team ministry for Billericay and Little Burstead was formed in 1977, consisting at that time of St Mary Magdalen (the old parish church), Christ Church (a 20th century church-plant) and St Mary the Virgin (the ancient parish church of Little Burstead).

The congregations in this parish grew in the early and mid 1980's, peaking in 1986 and again in 1991 at 459 average attendance. The attendances have subsequently declined, partly as a

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<sup>1</sup>Details in this paragraph are from G.S. Amos *Parish Church of Billericay* pp.4-10

<sup>2</sup>Revd W.S. Smith 1930 Visitation Return ( E.R.O. D/CV 4/1)

result of staffing cuts. The figures for Christ Church in 1988-91 included a few extra attendances from its church-planting project. St John the Divine was moved from the neighbouring parish in late 1989 and the curate of St Mary Magdalen given pastoral responsibility for the congregation.

The parish count returned to the diocese is given in table 7.1 below:

Table 7.1 Billericay Parish Counts 1984-96

	EM	JD	CC	MV	Total	% Decadal Change
1984					401	-
1985	243	-	146	51	440	-
1986	248	-	163	48	459	-
1987	226	-	163	42	432	-
1988	225	-	175	40	440	-
1989	226	-	173	40	439	-
1990	199	24	197	31	451	-
1991	210	31	172	46	459	-
1992	206	34	169	44	453	-
1993	181	37	161	31	410	-
1994	167	37	146	33	383	-4.5
1995	157	45	130	26	358	-18.6
1996	152	39	121	24	336	-26.8

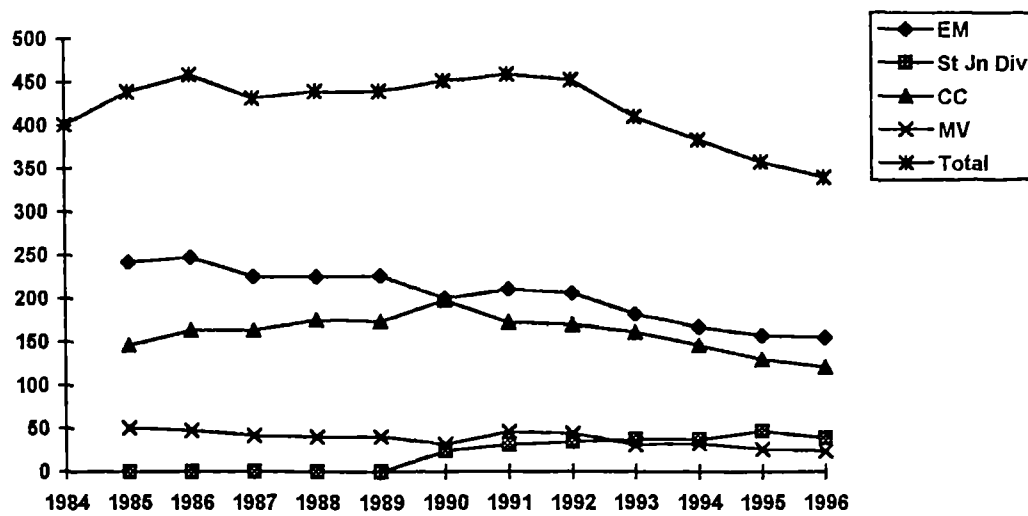
Abbreviations: EM Emmanuel (in St Mary Magdalen to 1992) JD St John the Divine

CC Christ Church MV St Mary the Virgin, Little Burstead

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<sup>3</sup>David Wasdell *Facing the Future* p.v

Figure 7.1 Billericay Parish Counts 1985-96



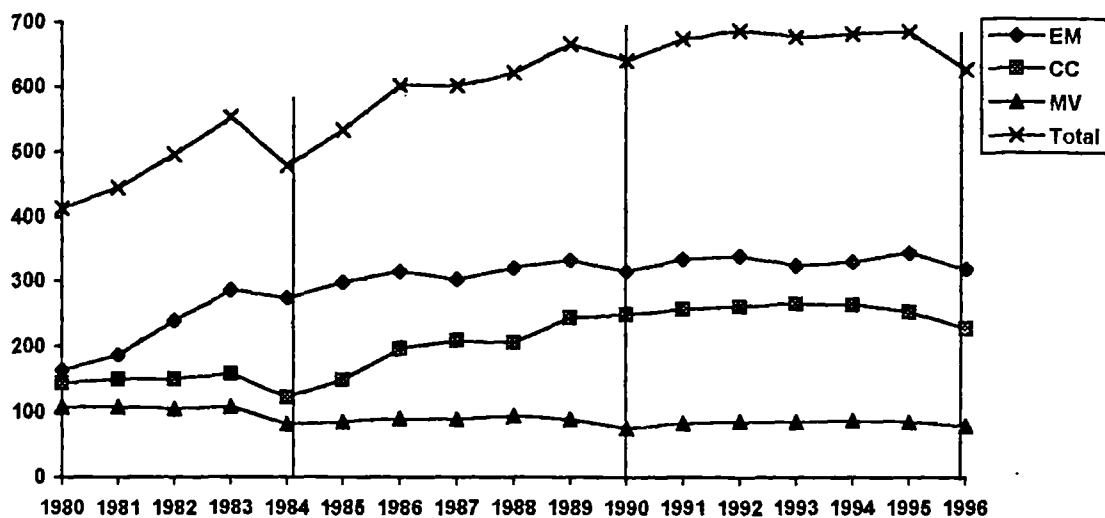
On the basis of these figures the Billericay team overall ceased to increase attendances in 1991, the year the number of full-time ministers was cut from 5 to 4. However, a different trend emerges if the Electoral Roll figures - the basis of the Anglican surveys discussed in chapter 2 - are examined.

Table 7.1a Billericay Electoral Roll 1980-96

	EM	JD	CC	MV	Total
1980	164		144	108	414
1981	187		150	108	445
1982	240		151	106	497
1983	287		159	109	555
1984	275		123	82	480
1985	300		150	86	536
1986	316		197	91	604
1987	304		210	90	604
1988	322		207	95	624
1989	334		245	90	669
1990	317		250	76	643
1991	336		258	84	678

1992	340		262	87	689
1993	326		267	86	679
1994	332		266	88	686
1995	348		256	87	691
1996	268	54	230	80	632

Figure 7.2 Electoral Roll numbers, Billericay, 1980-96



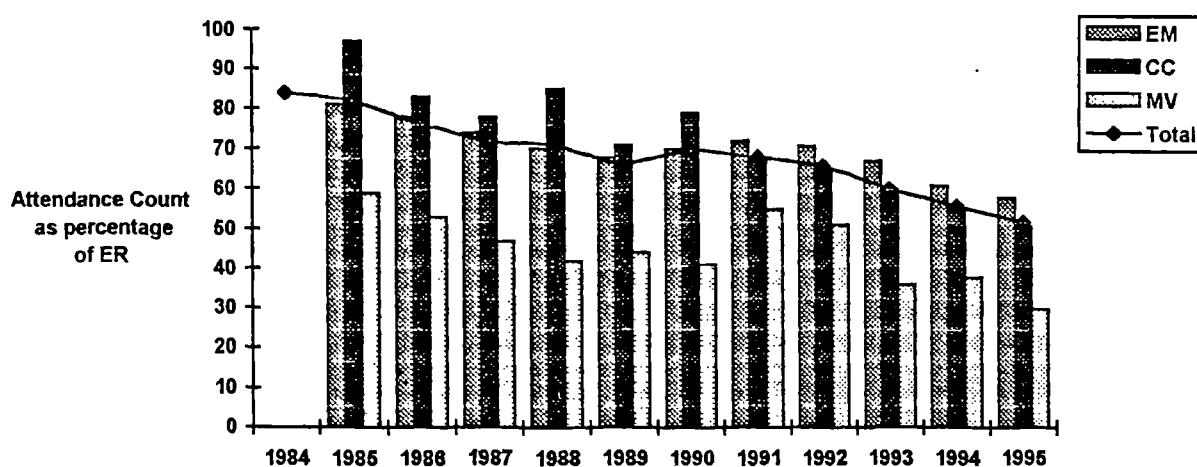
The graph of the Electoral Roll figures shows when new Rolls were prepared; there has been only one other year (1993) where the total number on the Electoral Rolls declined. Through this period there has been no change of policy on enrolling people; this suggests continuing support for these churches, though the growth of the 1980's has not been continued into the 1990's. There is a considerable lag between the decline in attendance and any decline in the Electoral Rolls.

When the Electoral Roll figures are compared with the attendance figures there is evidence in a decline of frequency of attendance. The following table sets out the attendance count as a percentage of the Electoral Roll:

Table 7.1b Parish Counts as a percentage of Electoral Roll figures, Billericay, 1984-95

	EM	JD	CC	MV	Average
1984					84
1985	81		97	59	82
1986	78		83	53	76
1987	74		78	47	72
1988	70		85	42	71
1989	68		71	44	66
1990	70		79	41	70
1991	72		67	55	68
1992	71		65	51	66
1993	67		60	36	60
1994	61		55	38	56
1995	58		51	30	52

Figure 7.3 Attendances and Electoral Rolls compared, Billericay, 1984-95



The attendance count as a proportion of the Electoral Roll shows a steady decline over the whole period 1984 to 1995, apart from the slight rise in 1990 when the Rolls had been revised. Even during periods of growth for individual congregations, for example Christ Church from 1985 to 1990, there is little change in the downward trend for the parish as a whole.

It is not known how widespread the phenomenon of less frequent attendance by individuals is, though recent references to the phenomenon were given in chapter 5. Anecdotal evidence has suggested it is common at least in the diocese of Chelmsford.<sup>4</sup> It has also been referred to by Warren<sup>5</sup> though again the evidence appears to be anecdotal.

All these features suggest that the Billericay team reflects many diocesan and national trends in its attendance, and therefore makes an instructive case study.

Each congregation is discussed individually first; a summary for the parish as a whole is given at the end of the chapter.

## 7.2 Christ Church, Billericay

The first survey was undertaken at Christ Church in conjunction with a survey on attitudes to worship. A copy of the survey form is in Appendix C. The survey was compiled by the author and then checked with a small representative group for content and wording.

262 forms were issued and 189 returned. Only 2 were returned by visitors, another 13 came from those in the 0-15 age group. So 174 were returned from people who regarded themselves as members of the church and were in the age group included in the parish count (at that stage). This can be compared with the count of 161 in 1993, indicating a very high response rate. This was partly due to the high level of interest in the worship survey and the availability of the survey forms for several Sundays.

### 7.2.1 Survey Results

In giving these results the numbering of the questions has been conformed to that of the questionnaires given to other congregations for ease of comparison. Because Christ Church produced the highest number of responses of any of the surveyed churches (21%) the results

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<sup>4</sup> Evidence comes from asking colleagues for their impressions on this point, and from parish audits carried out by students at Oak Hill college in spring, 1995, as reported by one of the students, Fran Wakefield.

are more likely to conform to the overall results than those for a church with a lower response. Hence, where the results differ in a marked way it is likely that a real difference is being observed.

Tables of the kind that follow have been produced for all the churches surveyed and sent to the ministers concerned. They are reproduced in this first case in full; for the other congregations attention is drawn to features which differ from the overall survey results.

### Questions 1 and 2

Table 7.2 Age-gender numbers, Christ Church

	0-15	16-30	31-45	46-60	61-75	75+	Total
Female	10	20	40	36	12	6	124
Male	3	9	24	18	10	1	65
Totals	13	29	64	54	22	7	189

These are calculated as percentages of the total responses in the following table

Table 7.3 Age-gender percentages, Christ Church

	0-15	16-30	31-45	46-60	61-75	75+	Total
Female	5	11	21	19	6	3	66
Male	2	5	13	10	5	1	34
Totals	7	15	34	29	12	4	100

Relatively few young people responded to the survey.

Table 7.4 Age-gender percentages, adults, Christ Church

	16-30	31-45	46-60	61-75	75+	Total
Female	11	23	20	7	3	65
Male	5	14	10	6	1	35
Totals	16	36	31	13	4	100

<sup>5</sup> Warren *Signs of Life* p.46f



Compared with the survey as a whole there were slightly more women in the 31-60 age-groups (43% compared with 40%) and slightly fewer people older than 60 (17% compared with 19%). Given the high rate of response this shows that Christ Church is a far more middle aged (31-60) church than the national average in the 1989 MARC Europe survey (67% compared with 53% aged 30-64 in the national survey). The female/male ratio was 1.8, slightly higher than the average of the whole survey, which was itself close to the national averages found in other surveys.

Table 7.5 Years as a Christian, adults, Christ Church

Years as a Christian	Total	Percentage of adults	Annual conversion rate
Raised	59	34%	-
0-1 Year	4	2%	2½%
1-5 Years	19	11%	2½%
6-10 Years	31	18%	3½%
11-20 Years	26	15%	1½%
20+ Years	35	20%	-
Not a Christian	2	1%	-

One third of the adults regarded themselves as brought up as Christians, compared with one quarter of the survey overall. More people had been Christians for 0-10 years (31% compared with 28% overall) and fewer for 10 or more years (35% compared with 43% overall). The annual conversion rate for 0-20 years is 2.3%, about the survey mean, even with the high number brought up as Christians. The conversion rate was highest in the period 6-10 years ago. The profile for the congregation of length of time as a Christian reflects the higher rate of growth in the church over the preceding ten years, especially 6-10 years previous to the survey.

Table 7.6 Years in present church, adults, Christ Church

Years in this church	Total	% of 0-10+ Years	Annual rate of joining
0-1 Year	14	8%	8%
1-5 Years	47	28%	7%
6-10 Years	38	22%	4½%
10+ Years	71	42%	-
Visitor	3	-	
Not answered	3	-	

The annual rate of joining over the preceding 10 years was comparable to the diocesan figures of chapter 2 (about 7% per year). The annual rates of joining are a little lower than the overall rates in the survey: taken with the previous question this implies that people at this church were more likely to have joined as a new Christian and stayed at it. This inference is supported by the lower than average proportion who transferred church (question 7 below).

Table 7.7 Reasons for joining, youth and adults, Christ Church

	Nearest	Friends	Worship	Preaching	Children	Converted	Other	Total
0-15	3	5	0	0	1	0	7	16
%	23	38	0	0	8	0	54	123
Adults	89	25	37	17	19	26	33	246
%	51	14	21	10	11	15	19	140

Both adults and 0-15 year olds were far more likely than the survey average to join because Christ Church was their nearest church, with some explicitly stating the nearest Anglican church. Just over half the adults gave the reason as nearest church, compared with just under one third in the whole survey. Slightly fewer cited friends, worship and preaching, slightly more (11% compared with 8%) provision for children. The proportion of conversions was the same as the survey mean.

Table 7.8 Immediate previous church attendance, adults, Christ Church

Attended a church		
before this one?	Adults	Percentage
Yes	106	60%
No	70	40%

The proportion transferring was lower than the survey mean of 65%. The 40% not previously attending a church is closer to the diocesan figures (chapter 2) than for the survey as a whole. Given the likely levels of transfer growth found in the diocesan surveys<sup>6</sup> this implies that the rate at Christ Church was likely to be similar to the generality of Anglican churches.

In answering the questions aimed at those who had transferred church, 98% of those transferring church answered question 8, 100% question 9, and 99% question 10.

Table 7.9 Reasons for moving church, adults, Christ Church

Reason for moving	Total	% of	% of adults
		movers	
Moved house	73	69	41
Unhappy elsewhere	18	17	10
Other	13	12	7
Not answered	2	2	1
Not moved	70	-	40

Even when allowance is made for transfers because of church planting in some of the surveyed churches, people joining Christ Church were far more likely to do so because of a house move. More than two-thirds of those transferring had moved house compared with half

<sup>6</sup> see the discussion in section 6.3, question 7

in the survey overall. This automatically implies that fewer people moved out of dissatisfaction or for other reasons.

Table 7.10 Denomination of previous church, adults, Christ Church

Previous denomination	Total	% of movers
Baptist	2	2
Church of England	81	76
Free Evangelical	6	6
House Church	14	13
Methodist	1	1
Roman Catholic	1	1
United Reform	0	0
Other	1	1
Not moved	70	0

The Anglican to non-Anglican ratio of people transferring is 3.2, lower than the diocesan ratios from chapter 2, but much higher than the mean ratio in the Wakefield survey. The non-Anglican transfers were mainly people who moved church when their House Church moved from Billericay to a neighbouring town. Apart from this event, the church appears to fit the majority pattern of Anglican churches found in the diocesan surveys.

Table 7.11 Attendance at previous church, adults, Christ Church

Frequency of attendance	Total	% of movers
Weekly	82	77
Fortnightly	10	9
Monthly	9	8
Rarely	4	4
No reply	71	1

Table 7.12 Attendance at present church, adults, Christ Church

Frequency of attendance	Total	% of adults
Weekly	138	78
Fortnightly	15	9
Monthly	13	7
Rarely	2	1
No reply	8	5

The weekly attendance rate at previous churches was 84%, at Christ Church 85%, slightly depressed by the 5% not answering this question. There is only slight evidence of increased attendance at Christ Church compared with attendance at a previous church. These rates of attendance are slightly lower than the survey figures of 88% at a previous church and 86% at the present one.

### 7.2.2 Some cross-tabulations of results

The same cross-tabulations described in chapter 6 are used here on Christ Church.

#### Rates of types of growth

Table 7.13 New attenders by length of present church attendance (Q. 5, 6(Converted), and 7), Christ Church

	Converted here (Q.6)	No previous church (Q.7 no)	Transfers (Q.7 yes)	Total new (Q. 5)
0-1 Year	1	5	9	14
1-5 Years	6	14	33	47
6-10 Years	10	16	22	38
10+ Years	9	31	40	71

Table 7.14 Annual rates of growth by length of present church attendance, as a proportion of total growth, Christ Church

	Conversion growth	Other new attenders	All with no previous church	Transfer growth	Total new (numbers)
0-1 Year	7%	29%	36%	64%	14
1-5 Years	13%	17%	30%	70%	47
6-10 Years	26%	16%	42%	58%	38
10+ Years	13%	31%	44%	56%	71
Average rates	15%	24%	39%	61%	170

The variation over time in the transfer growth rates was tested for significance:  $\chi^2 = 2.1$  with 3 degrees of freedom,  $p > 0.05$

Hence, although the percentage rates for transfers appear to vary considerably in table 7.14, the variation over time is not statistically significant. The higher conversion growth 6-10 years ago occurred with a somewhat lower transfer growth rate of 58% of all joiners. The high rate of new attenders joining 10 or more years ago was mainly because of biological and restoration growth, since conversions are less than a third of the new attenders.

The rate of transfer growth at all time periods was lower than in the survey overall.

The annual rate of growth in the preceding year was 8% overall, comprised of 5% transfer growth, the rest being conversion and restoration growth. This means that the lower rate of growth, by comparison with the survey as a whole, in the preceding year came about because of a lower rate of transfer growth, not of new attenders.

Reasons for leaving a churchTable 7.15 Reason for leaving previous church, by length of present church attendance.Christ Church

	Moved	Unhappy	Other	No reply	Total
0-1 Year	5	3	1	5	14
1-5 Years	18	8	7	14	47
6-10 Years	15	6	2	15	38
10+ Years	35	1	1	34	71
Visitor	0	0	2	1	3
No reply to Q.5	0	0	0	3	3
Totals (Q.8)	73	18	13	72	176

$\chi^2 = 16.7$  with 6 degrees of freedom,  $0.001 < p < 0.01$

The time variations in table 7.15 are statistically significant, though not at the same level as in the whole survey. Table 7.16 gives the percentage at each period of reasons for transfer:

Table 7.16 Reason for leaving previous church, by length of present church attendance, as a percentage of those giving a reason for transferring in each period, Christ Church

	Moved	Unhappy	Other	Total
0-1 Year	56%	33%	11%	9
1-5 Years	55%	24%	21%	33
6-10 Years	65%	26%	9%	23
10+ Years	95%	3%	3%	37
Mean proportions	72%	18%	11%	102

The proportion moving house is 72% in this table, different from the figure given previously (69% in table 7.9) because a few questionnaires did not have all the required questions answered. The very high figure for house moves of 95% 10+ years ago probably reflects the high level of house building at that time. The trend is that of the whole survey: an increasing

amount of movement because of dissatisfaction elsewhere and a drop in the proportion moving church because of a house move. The proportion who moved house is higher at all periods than in the survey overall.

#### Reasons for joining the present church

The time variations of motivations for leaving are cross-tabulated for adults are in table 7.17:

Table 7.17 Reasons for joining by length of present church attendance, Christ Church

<b>Years in this</b>							<b>other</b>	<b>Total</b>
<b>church</b>	<b>nearest</b>	<b>friends</b>	<b>worship</b>	<b>preaching</b>	<b>children</b>	<b>converted</b>	<b>reason</b>	<b>new</b>
0-1 Year	7	0	3	0	0	1	5	14
1-5 Years	17	14	14	12	5	6	12	47
6-10 Years	17	4	10	4	8	10	4	38
10+ Years	47	6	10	1	6	9	11	71
Visitor	1	1	0	0	0	0	1	3
Totals (Q.6)	89	25	37	17	19	26	33	173

three people gave no answers to either question

The reasons given have been calculated as percentages of those joining in the various periods in table 7.18 that follows:

Table 7.18 Reasons for joining by length of present church attendance, as a proportion of joiners in each period, Christ Church

<b>Years in this</b>							<b>other</b>	<b>Total</b>
<b>church</b>	<b>nearest</b>	<b>friends</b>	<b>worship</b>	<b>preaching</b>	<b>children</b>	<b>converted</b>	<b>reason</b>	<b>reasons</b>
0-1 Year	50%	0%	21%	0%	0%	7%	36%	114%
1-5 Years	36%	30%	30%	26%	11%	13%	26%	170%
6-10 Years	45%	11%	26%	11%	21%	26%	11%	150%
10+ Years	66%	8%	14%	1%	8%	13%	15%	127%
Mean %	51%	14%	21%	10%	11%	15%	19%	142%



Two-thirds of those joining 10 or more years ago did so because this was the nearest church and in each period the proportion giving this reason is much higher than in the survey as a whole. Of those joining 6-10 years ago a quarter were converts, slightly higher than the survey mean and over one fifth cited provision for children, compared with a survey mean of 8%. Apart from 'nearest' all the other reasons were given less frequently than in the survey overall for that period.

Those joining 1-5 years ago were more likely to do so because of the style of worship, though the level (30%) was still below the survey mean for this period of 38%. Over one quarter cited preaching, a rate higher than found generally, and friendship was more important than in other periods at Christ Church. Along with the slightly higher rate of transfer growth this reflects the influx of people who had previously been attending the House Church.

Those joining in the preceding year continued the pattern of joining the nearest church.

One of the most interesting comparisons in the Wakefield survey was between reasons for joining and leaving (see chapter 6.4.3); the same comparison is here carried out on Christ Church.

Table 7.19 Reasons for leaving compared with reasons for joining, Christ Church

	nearest	friends	worship	preaching	children	converted	other	totals
Moved house	59	6	17	7	7	0	4	100
Unhappy	3	4	6	5	4	0	8	30
Other	2	6	3	3	2	0	5	21
Not replied (Q.8)	25	9	11	2	6	26	16	95
Totals (Q. 6)	89	25	37	17	19	26	33	246

Table 7.20 Reasons for leaving compared with reasons for joining as percentages of those leaving for a given reason, Christ Church

%'s add this way →

	nearest	friends	worship	preaching	children	converted	other	totals
Moved house	81	8	23	10	10	0	5	137
Unhappy	17	22	33	28	22	0	44	167
Other	15	46	23	23	15	0	38	162
Not replied	35	13	15	3	8	36	22	132
Totals	51	14	21	10	11	15	19	140

Because of relatively low numbers in most cells of table 7.19 comments are restricted to the more obvious differences to the survey as a whole.

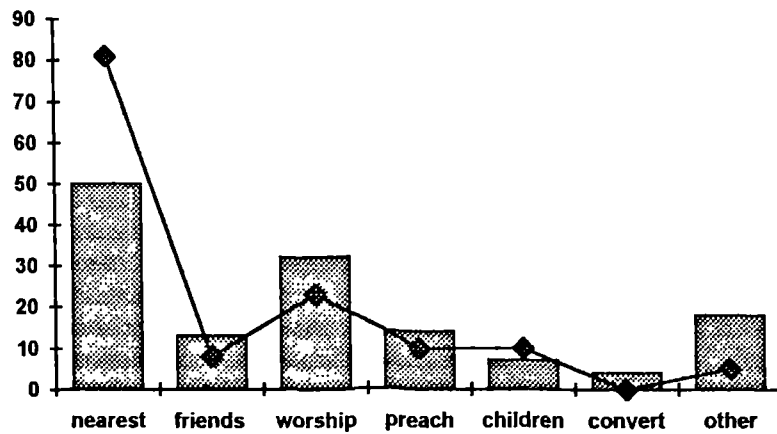
Comparing table 7.20 with its equivalent for the whole survey (table 6.23) confirms that people were far more likely to join Christ Church because it was their nearest church, or at least, nearest Anglican church. Just over half (51%) of all respondents gave this reason. This was especially noticeable for those transferring because of a house move: in the survey as a whole 50% of this group chose their nearest church, for Christ Church it was 81%. Indeed, Christ Church respondents accounted for 59 out of 134 (44%) in this category (house move/nearest church), but were only 27% of all those moving house in the survey.

Those who left a church for 'other' reasons were more likely to join Christ Church because of friendships than in the survey overall (46% compared with 28%). Checking with table 7.21 below suggests that this is likely to be the group leaving the House Church for Christ Church.

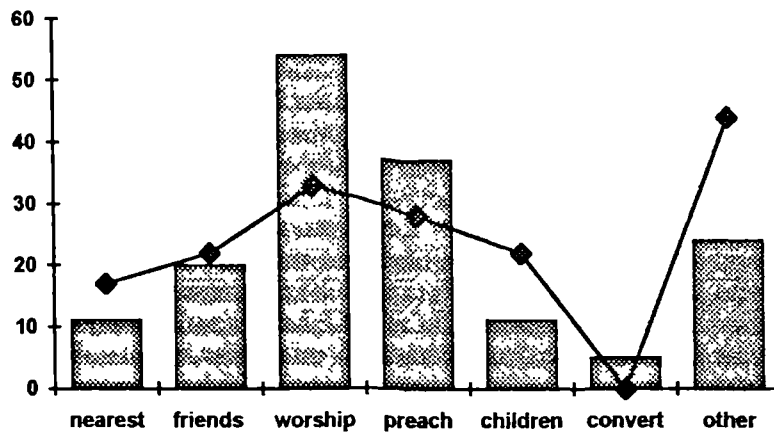
Those not replying to Q.8 and therefore new to church attendance (except for 2 people, see tables 7.8 and 7.9) were more likely to join because it was the nearest church (35% compared with 26%) and less likely because of friendship (13% compared with 23%).

The following graphs give these results in a visual form. In each case, Christ Church results are the line, overall results are shown as the columns used in chapter 6:

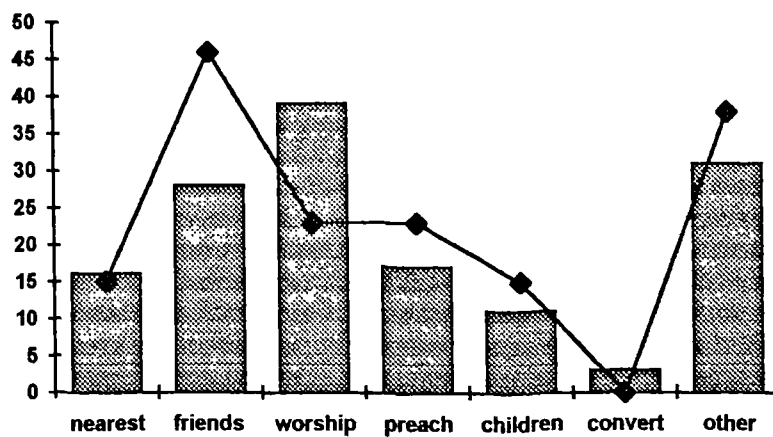
Reasons those moving house gave for joining, Christ Church compared with the whole survey



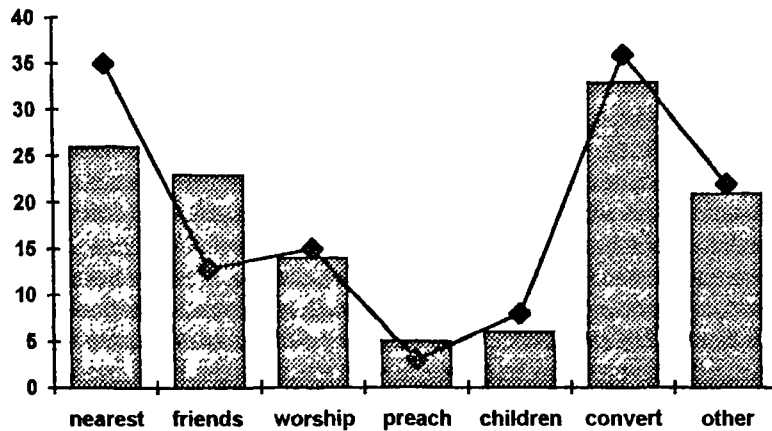
Reasons those who were unhappy at a previous church gave for joining:



Reasons those who left for 'other' reasons gave for joining:



Reasons those who did not have a previous church (or who did not reply to Q.8) gave for joining:



The charts show very clearly that the different reasons for joining seen in the overall survey were even more marked in this congregation: the shape of the line indicates the very different motivations for choosing a particular church, depending on the previous church experience of the individual.

#### Denominational fluidity and related comparisons

Table 7.21 compares the responses to questions 8 and 9:

Table 7.21 Reasons for leaving compared with previous denomination, Christ Church

	Bapt.	CoE	Free Ev.	Ho. Ch.	Meth.	RC	URC	Other	None	Total
Moved house	0	67	2	3	1	0	0	0	0	73
Unhappy	0	9	3	5	0	0	0	1	0	18
Other	1	4	1	6	0	1	0	0	0	13
Not answered	1	1	0	0	0	0	0	0	70	72
Totals	2	81	6	14	1	1	0	1	70	176

Clearly it is necessary to combine the non-Anglican figures in order to draw any conclusions from this cross-tabulation.

Table 7.22 Reasons for leaving compared with previous denomination, Anglican or non-Anglican, Christ Church

	CoE		Other churches		Totals
Moved house	67	84%	6	25%	73
Unhappy	9	11%	9	38%	18
Other	4	5%	9	38%	13
Totals	80	100%	24	100%	104

Of Anglican movers 84% did so because of moving house, far higher than the overall survey mean of 58%. In contrast, those changing denomination were less like to have moved house (25% compared with 41% overall) and more likely to have been dissatisfied or have some other reason for changing church.

Table 7.23 Types of transfer growth, adults, Christ Church

	same denomination	changed denomination	totals
moved house	67	6	73
did not move house	13	18	31
totals	80	24	104

Table 7.24 records these values as percentages of all adults in the survey at Christ Church:

Table 7.24 Types of transfer growth, proportion of all adults, Christ Church

	same denomination	changed denomination	totals
moved house	38%	3%	41%
did not move house	7%	10%	18%
totals	45%	14%	59%

Comparing this table with the same table for the survey overall (table 6.27) shows a slightly higher rate of transfer growth (59% compared with 55%). Those remaining Anglicans and moving house is greater at Christ Church (38% compared with 23%), the other 3 cells have lower rates than generally in the survey. Christ Church is likely to be more typical of Anglican churches generally certainly than the congregations in other surveyed parishes, where the non-Anglican transfer growth was very high.

Table 7.25 Reasons for leaving over time, Anglicans, Christ Church

<b>Years in this church</b>	<b>Unhappy (1)</b>	<b>Moved house (2)</b>	<b>Ratio (1) to (2)</b>	<b>Other</b>	<b>Total</b>	<b>Ratio of Ang. to non-Ang.</b>
0-1 Year	3	4	0.75	0	7	3.5
1-5 Years	2	16	0.1	0	18	1.2
6-10 Years	4	12	0.3	1	17	2.8
10+ Years	0	35	0	1	36	36
<b>Totals</b>	<b>9</b>	<b>67</b>	<b>0.1</b>	<b>2</b>	<b>78</b>	<b>3.3</b>

Table 7.26 Reasons for leaving over time, non-Anglicans, Christ Church

<b>Years in this church</b>	<b>Unhappy (1)</b>	<b>Moved house (2)</b>	<b>Ratio (1) to (2)</b>	<b>Other</b>	<b>Total</b>
0-1 Year	0	1	0	1	2
1-5 Years	6	2	3.0	7	15
6-10 Years	2	3	0.7	1	6
10+ Years	1	0	-	0	1
<b>Totals</b>	<b>9</b>	<b>6</b>	<b>1.5</b>	<b>9</b>	<b>24</b>

These tables again record the impact of the closure of the house church in Billericay, with 10 out of 13 of the dissatisfied and 'other' non-Anglicans joining 1-5 years previously, joining from that fellowship. In the other periods, the results are far more typical of what this thesis

has found elsewhere: a strong denominational loyalty, combined with an increasing rate of movement because of dissatisfaction with another church. The changing pattern in church transfers is highlighted by the composition of the 37 those who joined 10 or more years ago: 35 were Anglicans who had moved house.

Using the information in tables 7.25 and 7.26 it is possible to calculate the various transfer growth rates over the preceding year, as a percentage of those responding:

Table 7.27 Types of transfer growth, Christ Church in the preceding year

	same denomination	changed denomination	totals
moved house	2.3%	0.6%	2.8%
did not move house	1.7%	0.6%	2.3%
totals	4.0%	1.1%	5.1%

This confirms that transfer growth is somewhat lower at Christ Church than in the survey generally, though higher for Anglicans moving house. This pattern was continued in the most recent period surveyed. It was also closer to the diocesan rates discussed in chapter 2.

### 7.2.3 Christ Church Summary

Where it is possible to compare the results in the present survey with the diocesan surveys of chapter 2 Christ Church gives similar results, more so than the average in the present survey. In particular, it has a rate of transfer growth similar to the diocesan average rates.

Christ Church is more middle-aged than most Anglican churches. The length of Christian life of the congregation members showed two features in which it differed from the other surveyed churches: a high proportion who regarded themselves as brought up as Christians (over one third, compared with one quarter in the whole survey), together with a higher proportion converted in the previous 10 years. The observation that the congregation comprised of a

substantial core of 'cradle' Christians with another substantial group of relatively new converts is borne out by some of the tensions at the time of the survey in the style of worship thought to be appropriate. Nonetheless, the initial reason for joining was frequently that it was the nearest church to people rather than the style of worship.

### 7.3 Emmanuel, Billericay

The Emmanuel church building was opened in June 1992 for the existing congregation of St Mary Magdalen and the congregation literally walked from one building to the other. A new building was erected because of pressures in the older building through the growth of the congregation in the early 1980's. The present name of Emmanuel is used throughout the following description to refer to the congregation, although it would have been known as St Mary Magdalen for most of the period under discussion.

#### 7.3.1 Survey Results

A full set of results has been supplied to Emmanuel church. The following is a summary of the main points, particularly drawing attention to results which vary from the survey as a whole.

All survey forms were filled in on one day: 11th July 1993. 141 forms were returned, 34 by young people and 3 by adult visitors. Thus 104 forms were returned by adult regular attenders, compared with the attendance count for 1993 of 181. The lower percentage responding compared with Christ Church reflects the fact that the forms were given out on one day only.

The age-gender breakdown was similar to the survey overall; the main difference was a greater female/male imbalance in the 31-60 age-groups, where the ratio was 2.1 compared with 1.7 overall in the survey for this age group.. There were also more forms filled in by those under 16, reflecting the pattern of attendance for young people at Emmanuel.



Over the 20 year period the annual conversion rate was the same as the survey mean at 2.4%, though none answering had become a Christian in the preceding year. The annual rate of joining Emmanuel peaked 6-10 years ago and the church had more than twice the rate of joining 11-20 years ago compared with the rest of the survey, at 3% of membership per year, compared with 1½% overall. It implies considerable long-term commitment to Emmanuel. (A little of the difference in the long-term commitment is because of the number of young church plants in the survey overall.)

More significantly, the trend suggests that it had become more difficult to join Emmanuel in the 5 years before the survey. Only 5 adults had joined in the preceding year, 3 because of moving house and 2 out of dissatisfaction at a previous Anglican church. On a more positive note there were also 5 young people who joined the church in that year.

The reasons given for joining Emmanuel were in approximately the same proportions as in the survey overall. The biggest difference was that more people (23% of the adults) cited friendship as a factor, compared with 19% overall. No young people gave worship or preaching as a reason for joining.

63% of the adults had attended another church immediately before Emmanuel, slightly fewer than the survey mean of 65%. Two thirds of these had moved house and one fifth moved out of dissatisfaction. This means Emmanuel's profile of types of growth was very similar to that of Christ Church, and more like that of the diocesan results in chapter 2 than was generally the case in this survey. This perception is reinforced by the high ratio of Anglican to non-Anglican transfers, 5.6. Only 10 of the 67 transferring church had previously attended a non-Anglican church.

The weekly attendance rate at a previous church was 88%, for present attendance at Emmanuel it was 91%, showing a greater commitment in the present church against the result in the survey as a whole.

Further information was obtained from the cross-tabulation of questions. These show that the conversion growth rate was highest amongst those joining 11-20 years ago while no-one said

they had been converted in the preceding year, here or elsewhere. Interestingly, no-one who had attended for 20+ years had been converted at Emmanuel, though 4 people in the survey had joined at that period. The growth of Emmanuel in the period 11-20 years preceding the survey is picked out by the high rate of conversions then. (The Electoral Roll increased by 100 from 1981-83, a rise of 53% in 2 years.)

The differences over time in the rate of transfer growth were not significant statistically<sup>7</sup> but this analysis does highlight the changing patterns of growth at Emmanuel.

Reasons for leaving a church show the same changes as in the rest of the survey: an increasing proportion moving church because of dissatisfaction elsewhere. The low number of those transferring from non-Anglican churches prevents further comment on that group. The Anglican values show very clearly the trend to move church far more commonly because of dissatisfaction: it is interesting to note this occurring in a situation where denominational loyalty is very high. As such, it adds weight to the comments in chapter 6 about the increase in movement out of dissatisfaction, even allowing for the possibility of disgruntled attenders moving on several times.

Reasons for joining the present church have varied over time:

- 20+ years ago the most common reason was joining the nearest church (54%). This dropped substantially subsequently, though not in a straightforward way.
- 11-20 years ago was the period with the highest number joining because of conversion (24% joining during that time).
- 6-10 years ago one third joined because of the style of worship and friendship became increasingly important.
- 1-5 years ago half gave friendship as a reason for joining, with nearness increasing again to one third of those joining then.

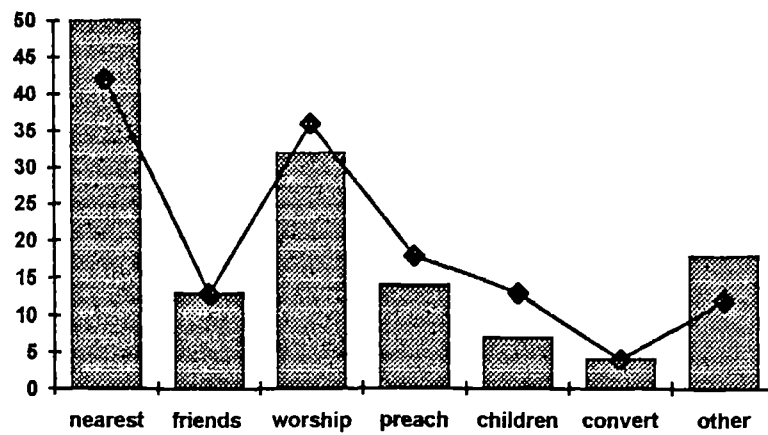
The variation in reasons reflects and illustrates the history of the congregation.

When reasons for joining were cross-tabulated with reasons for leaving there were some differences to the survey overall. These are illustrated in charts of the type used previously:

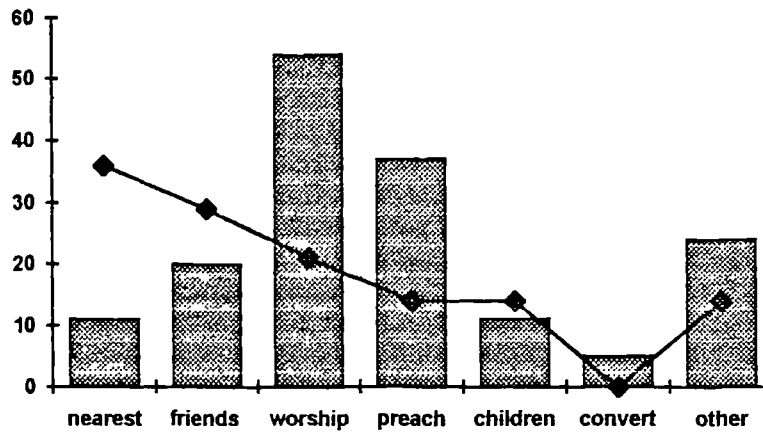
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<sup>7</sup>  $\chi^2 = 5.7$  with 4 degrees of freedom,  $p > 0.05$

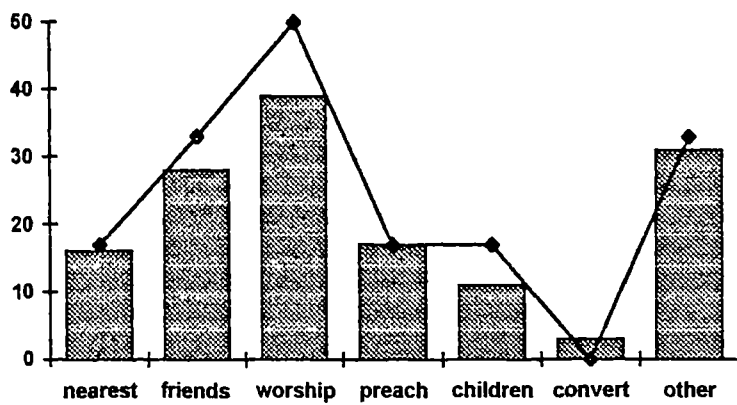
Reasons those moving house gave for joining:



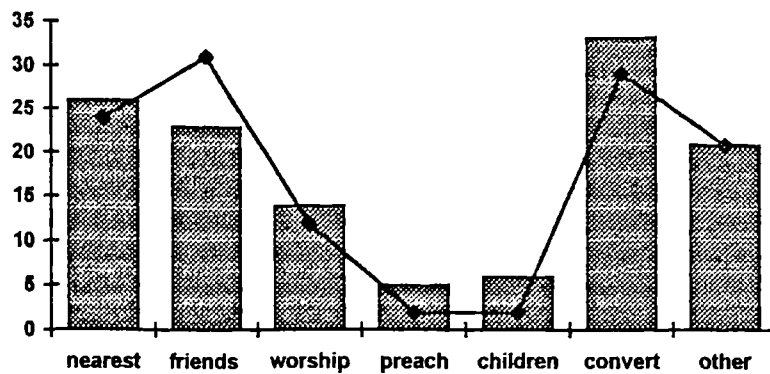
Reasons those who were unhappy at a previous church gave for joining:



Reasons those who left for other reasons gave for joining:



Reasons those who did not have a previous church (no reply to Q.8) gave for joining:



- Those who **moved house** were a little more likely to join because of preaching and the provision for children, and less for 'other' reasons and as the nearest church.
- Those who were **dissatisfied** elsewhere were much more likely to choose Emmanuel as the nearest church (36% against 11%), and much less likely to choose worship, preaching or 'other'. Note that only 14 adults came into this category at Emmanuel, Billericay.
- Just 6 people gave '**other**' reasons so comments on their reasons are not justified.
- Those who **had no previous church** (i.e. they did not reply to Q.8) were more likely to have joined because of friends (nearly one third gave this reason compared with 23% overall), their other choices were similar to the survey overall.

The results are different in detail to those of Christ Church, but again show that people from different backgrounds have quite different reasons for choosing a particular church. The comparison between the two congregations on this issue and the types of growth at different time periods show how the history of the congregation is brought out very clearly, even with this relatively simple questionnaire.

The low rate of denominational change has already been noted. Those who did change denomination had generally moved house (9 out of 10), rather than being dissatisfied elsewhere. Rather more Anglicans moved church out of dissatisfaction elsewhere (24% against 15% in the survey overall, table 6.25); this may relate to being part of a team, with churches relatively close together (note the high proportion of those dissatisfied who chose the nearest church) and with changes at Christ Church.

### 7.3.2 Emmanuel Summary

Like Christ Church, Emmanuel has many features in common with the diocesan results in chapter 2. The features which distinguish Emmanuel in this survey are

- the higher proportion of the congregation which has belonged for more than 10 years
- the bunching of conversions at Emmanuel in the period 11-20 years before the survey
- the low number of non-Anglicans transferring into Emmanuel
- the importance of friendships for those joining in the period 6-10 years before the survey

## 7.4 St Mary the Virgin, Little Burstead

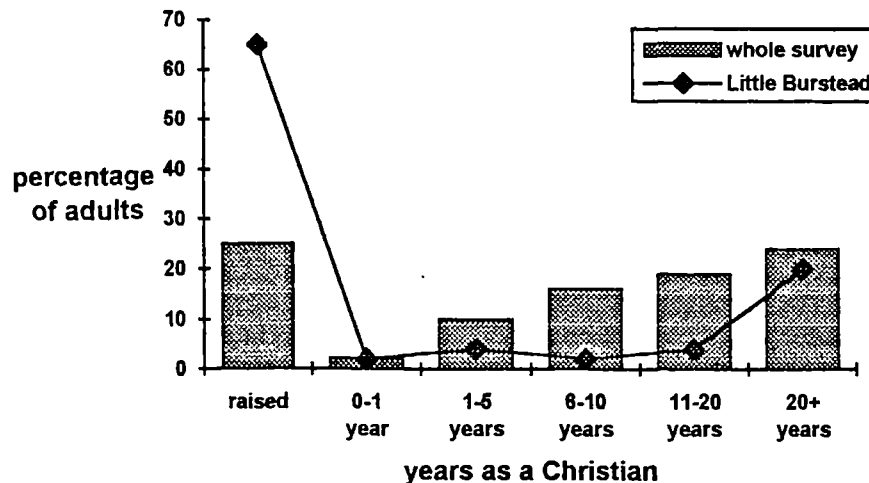
The parish of Little Burstead is an ancient one, dating back to Norman times. It remained a separate parish until 1977 when joined to Billericay in a team. It was seen at the time to need the support of a larger church if it were to survive.

### 7.4.1 Survey Results

A total of 47 forms were returned from several Sundays in June and July 1993. Of these 1 was from a young person and 6 from visitors. Thus 40 came from adult regular attenders, compared with the attendance count for 1993 of 31. This suggests that the survey covered the majority of those who were attending the church on any regular basis at that time.

The female/male balance was the same as in the survey as a whole, but the age distribution was different. One quarter were 16-30 years old compared with 17% overall: this was because couples go to hear banns read in the summer months. Nearly half those replying were aged 46-60 years old, and they were the more regular attenders, showing an ageing congregation. There was, though, no-one aged over 75, probably because of the difficulty of access to the building.

Remarkably, nearly two-thirds of this congregation described themselves as brought up as a Christian, compared with only one quarter in the survey as a whole. The difference in perception is very significant for the sense of mission of this congregation. Most of the other respondents said they had been Christians for more than 20 years. This finding is illustrated in the following graph:



The rate at which people joined the congregation was only a little lower than the survey as a whole in the preceding 5 years, but in the period 6-10 years it was only half that in the survey as a whole (14% of adults compared with 28%). Correspondingly, there were more people who had attended for more than 10 years.

The main variations from the whole survey in reasons for joining were that only 4% said they had been converted here compared with 15%, and that 37% said it was their nearest church, compared with 31% overall. The latter result was somewhat surprising, given the isolated position of the church, but analysis of addresses on the Electoral Roll showed this was plausible.

The other reasons for joining were given in similar proportions to the survey overall. A further surprise in these figures was that despite very limited facilities for children provision for children was still given as frequently as elsewhere.

59% had attended another church immediately before this one, a lower proportion than in the survey overall. This rate was lower partly because of the length of time people had attended this church. Of those moving church, half had moved house and half gave 'other' reasons. The likelihood was that most in this latter group were dissatisfied elsewhere but did not feel able to say so since Christ Church was one church some had left, a case of observer interference.

Of those who had moved church, only 5 had changed denomination. The ratio of Anglicans to non-Anglicans was 4.6, much as in the diocesan surveys of chapter 2, and very unlike the survey ratio of 1.8.

The weekly attendance rate for both the previous church and the present one were the lowest in the survey at 60% and 68%<sup>8</sup> respectively. This did show some increase in frequency of attendance at St Mary the Virgin, but the relatively low level of commitment implied was another factor in the generally perceived weakness of the church. The low rate for attendance at this church arose because a quarter of those responding came monthly to particular services.

From the cross-tabulation of questions it was found that people joined the congregation at all periods, including 5 people in the previous year. Those transferring from other churches were a slightly smaller proportion than in the survey as a whole, but only 2 of the 14 not attending elsewhere previously described themselves as converted at the church. This cross-tabulation therefore implied more consistent movement of new attenders into the congregation than might have been expected from the analysis of individual questions.

In general the smaller numbers in this survey mean that the cross-tabulations have very small numbers in some cells. In most of the cases the results were not greatly different from the survey as a whole. However, it is worth noting that more than half the people who did not have a previous church came because it was 'nearest', compared with only a quarter giving

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<sup>8</sup> The visitors, six in all, were excluded from this calculation; their inclusion would have artificially depressed the rate further.

this reason in the survey as a whole. Such people also gave 'style of worship' as a reason more frequently, 4 out of 17, compared with 14% in the whole survey.

In examining denominational fluidity it was perhaps surprising that those changing denomination were most likely to have moved house (80% compared with 41% in the whole survey), while Anglicans were less likely to have moved house (41% compared with 58%). Put another way, more than a quarter had moved from another Anglican church without moving house (28% compared with 11% in the whole survey).

The explanation would seem to be that it was easier for Anglicans to change church without moving house because of being part of a Team of churches. For non-Anglicans moving house there is no other nearby church and so a change of denomination occurs in order to worship locally.

This interpretation is supported by the more detailed cross-tabulation of reasons for leaving another church over time and by denomination: of the Anglicans moving church more than 20 years previously 5 out of 6 had moved house. The Team was formed 16 years before the survey. In the preceding 10 years only 2 Anglicans had moved house, but 7 had 'other' reasons for leaving another church.

#### 7.4.2 St Mary the Virgin Summary

The features which distinguish St Mary's in this survey are:

- the high proportion describing themselves as raised as a Christian and the few converted at the church
- the high proportion who gave 'other' reasons for leaving a previous church
- the low rate of denominational transfer
- the low frequency of attendance by respondents
- new attenders coming because it was their nearest church
- the high number of Anglican transfers without a move of house



## 7.5 St John the Divine, Billericay

The congregation was planted in 1968 in an area of housing built to replace houses destroyed in the East End during the Second World War. It was then part of Great Burstead parish and in the charge of a parish worker. By 1989 the regular congregation was just 6 people.

In that year the church was transferred to the Billericay team to be led by the curate from what was then St Mary Magdalen, with a small planting or grafting team<sup>9</sup> going with him. The church has since grown in number considerably, as can be seen in Table 7.1 and the accompanying graph. Although the language and methodology of church planting was not consciously followed, the practice was similar to that used in 'church grafting'.

### 7.5.1 Survey Results

All survey forms were filled in on one day: 27th June 1993. 36 forms were returned, 4 by young people and 9 by adult visitors. Thus 23 forms were returned by adult regular attenders, compared with a count of 37 in 1993. The count at St John's has been somewhat raised by the number of visitors for baptisms and relatively frequent parade services. This suggests that a reasonable proportion of the regular congregation did respond, but the small numbers involved mean that comparisons must be made tentatively.

The age-gender profile showed that the female/male ratio was similar to that in the whole survey at all age groups. The difference was the lack of people aged 16-30 (just one person) and the high number of older people (36% were aged 60+, 19% were in the whole survey).

As at St Mary the Virgin, nearly two-thirds described themselves as brought as a Christian. The proportion of the regular congregation describing themselves in this way is somewhat lower at 56%, but still much higher than in the whole survey. Only one regular attender said they had become a Christian in the previous 10 years, though more had not been previously attending a church.

The periods at which people had joined this church reflected the long-term commitment of a small core, a lack of new attenders 6-10 years previously and the new impetus provided by the 'graft': 62% of the regular attenders had joined in the preceding 5 years, compared with 47% in the whole survey.

The main reasons for joining were the nearness (41% compared with 31% in the whole survey) and 'other' (41% compared with 23%); this did not seem to especially relate to the church planting, since only one person gave that reason in Q.8. All other reasons scored much lower than in the rest of the survey, with style of worship the third most common reason (19% gave this reason).

Just over half the regular attenders had attended another church previously. Most commonly they had moved house, as in the whole survey. Of the 12 regular attenders who had changed church and giving a response, none had changed denomination to join this church.

The stated frequency of attendance at this church gave a weekly attendance rate of 70% for the regular attenders, rather lower than in the survey as a whole (83%).

### 7.5.2 St John the Divine Summary

The features which distinguish St John's in this survey are mostly similar to those of St Mary the Virgin:

- the high proportion describing themselves as raised as a Christian and the few converted at the church
- the high proportion who had 'other' reasons for leaving a previous church
- the lack of denominational transfer
- the low frequency of attendance by respondents

In addition,

- the congregation was relatively elderly
- the work of church 'grafting' had significantly increased the rate of joining

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<sup>9</sup> The term graft is used in *Breaking New Ground*, p.6, para. 2.5.ii to describe a team bringing new blood into an existing congregation in another parish. A variation in this case was that the parish boundaries were changed to accommodate the graft.

## 7.6 Parish Summary

Since this parish returned nearly 44% of the forms in the survey its results are generally similar to the overall findings discussed in chapter 6. However, there are some differences between this parish and the others surveyed:

- many more respondents (37%) said they had been brought up as Christians, compared with 25% overall
- fewer people (37%) had joined these churches in the preceding 5 years, compared with 47% overall
- the most common reason for joining was the nearness of the church (43%); although this was the most common reason overall the proportion was lower (31%)
- other reasons for joining were at percentages slightly lower than overall, except provision for children which was slightly higher
- the amount of transfer growth was lower than overall (59% compared with 65%)
- periods of overall growth show more correspondence to higher levels of conversion growth than transfer growth
- nearly two-thirds of those moving church did so because of a house move, compared with half overall
- the ratio of those joining from Anglican/non-Anglican churches was 4.2, compared with 1.8 overall; the value for Billericay is similar to those in the diocesan surveys of chapter 2

The overall pattern of growth was thought to imply that this parish was more typical of other Anglican parishes than the other parishes in the survey. Some the more detailed observations (especially reasons for joining and leaving churches, level of transfer growth and amount of denominational fluidity) seem to confirm that. As a case study, then, Billericay provides a useful benchmark, though inevitably with its own individual characteristics.

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## 8.1 Brief parish history<sup>1</sup>

### 8.1.1 Church Planting History

The area was originally part of the ancient parish of All Saints, Cranham. In the 1950's completely new housing estates were built. In 1957 St Luke's parish church was opened for the new parish of Cranham Park. There has been little additional house building since then, so that the subsequent church planting in the parish has in a situation of little or no population growth.

The first church plant, now called Moor Lane Church, was into a former Brethren chapel, sold for a nominal sum to the parish in 1982. This was led by the then curate. A second church plant, called Cranham Community Church, began in 1986 in a private home, quickly moving to the Community Centre.

The emphasis put upon church planting from the parish church is highlighted by two further experiments which have not been so successful as the first two.

A church plant was attempted on a small council estate which had few people attending church, but this was suspended after one year because of a lack of growth in numbers.

In 1991 the congregation at St Luke's split into two, meeting at 9.15 a.m. and 11 a.m. However, numbers did not grow as had been hoped and it led to a sense of being over-stretched amongst church members. The Wakefield survey was held during this period of two congregations at St Luke's. Later, under a new incumbent, the two congregations were re-united in 1994.

### 8.1.2 Recent History of Attendance

The average Sunday attendances are recorded in table 8.1:

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<sup>1</sup> Details from two short papers on Cranham Park Fellowship, prepared in 1992 by John Guest, then a curate in the parish.

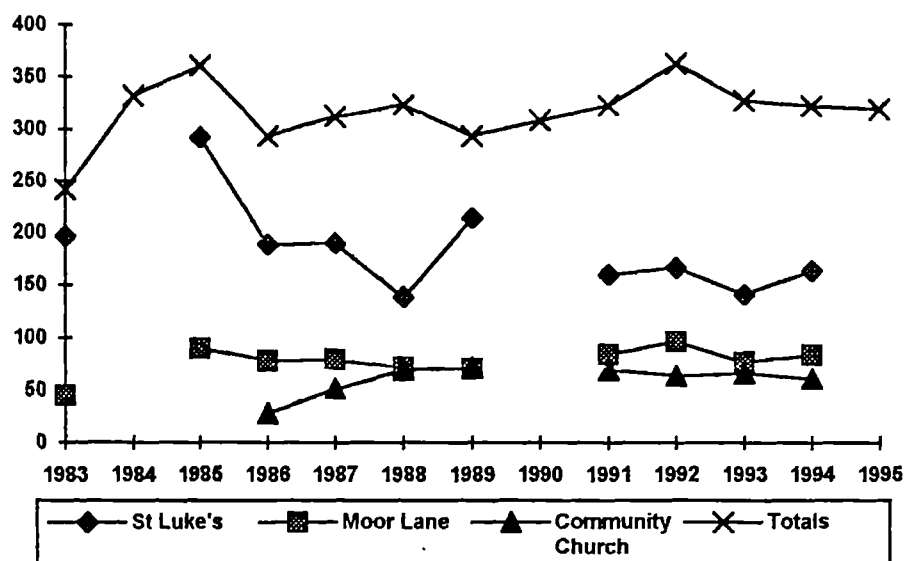
Table 8.1 Average Attendances, Cranham Park, 1983-95

Year	St Luke's	CM	CC	Evening	Park Estate	Totals	Parish Count	% Decadal Change
1983	197	45				242	242	-
1984							332	-
1985	293	90				383	362	-
1986	190	78	28			296	296	-
1987	192	80	52			324	315	-
1988	140	72	70	38		330	327	-
1989	217	71	72			360	298	-
1990							313	-
1991	162	85	70		10	327	327	-
1992	169	97	65	37		368	368	-
1993	144	78	67	56		345	333	+37.6
1994	167	85	62	44		358	328	-1.2
1995							325	-11.2

Note: Totals differ from the official diocesan count figures because of subsequent negotiations with the diocese over the level of the count. This has arisen mainly because the parish usually holds a confirmation service during the period of the count.

The figure for 1992 seems to have been raised by higher attendances in the weeks preceding the departure of the then incumbent. The services on his final Sunday have been excluded but the other Sundays were higher than expected, with a marked fall in the following week. This suggests that the attendance from 1990-95 was fairly constant, taking into account this distortion and those caused by confirmation services. Indeed, there has been no sustained increase in attendance since the rise of 90 (37%) from 1983-84. Ten years on, no-one in the parish could recall why there had been this sudden increase in attendance!

The main attendance trends are shown in the following chart, based on table 8.1:



Each congregation is now discussed in turn. The full tables have been given to the churches concerned. The discussion particularly draws attention to results which vary from the survey as a whole.

## 8.2 Moor Lane Church

The church at Moor Lane only just qualifies as a recent church plant being about 10 years old at the time of the survey; however, it retained an ethos of newness. The first curate in charge led the church planting team from 1982 to 1988, with a planting team of about 12 people. The present curate, Revd Dick Saunders, was appointed in 1989 and was very helpful in organising the survey in the whole parish and as a point of reference for enquiries on my part.

### 8.2.1 Moor Lane Summary

The features which distinguish Moor Lane church in the Wakefield survey are:

- a more elderly congregation, more typical of other Anglican churches
- a large number describing themselves as converted at the church
- a lower number of those transferring church because of a house move
- a large number of non-Anglican transfers, mainly in the earlier stages of the church's life

- those transferring church had a much greater commitment to Moor Lane than their previous churches, as measured by stated frequency of attendance
- taken together, there is evidence of attracting 'fringe' attenders from other churches, who then became more regular in attendance and in some cases saw their experience as conversion, a description not necessarily used in these circumstances in other congregations

### 8.2.2 Moor Lane survey results in more detail

Forms were filled in by 52 adults at this congregation; all younger people were in separate groups when the forms were distributed. The forms were filled in over a period of 3 weeks in May and June 1993. 44 were returned directly from Moor Lane church and a further 8 from members of Moor Lane attending the evening service. One came from a visitor. The 51 forms from regular attenders can be compared with their count in 1993 of 78, a ratio of 65%.

The most striking feature of the age-gender breakdown was the equal number of men and women responding to the survey. The comment of the curate-in-charge was that this was an artefact of the survey, not a true equality of sexes in the congregation.

The members of this congregation were older than generally in the survey, 65% were aged 46 and over, compared with 47% in the survey as a whole, and this was a true reflection of the whole congregation. This result was more typical of the national figures in the 1989 MARC Europe survey (table 6.4), in which 61% were aged 45 and over. The proportion in the 16-30 age group at Moor Lane was only one-third that in the whole survey and in the MARC Europe survey.

People had clearly joined the church in substantial numbers in the early stages of the church plant, but the number joining in the preceding year had been only half the survey average (just 3 people). It is not clear whether the higher rate in the earlier period reflects higher growth at that stage or a lower rate of subsequent leaving the church.



A few people responded that they had belonged to the church for more 10 years; they seem to be people who had moved from St Luke's, rather than being in attendance when the building was a Brethren chapel: correlation with Q.9 on denomination shows that previously 3 were Anglicans, 1 Baptist, 2 Methodist and one had no previous church.

People were less inclined to join because this was the nearest church than in the survey overall (25% compared with 31%). They were more likely to join for the style of worship (33%; overall 28%) or because they were converted at Moor Lane (25%; overall 15%).<sup>2</sup>

The proportion who had transferred was only slightly higher than in the whole survey (67% compared with 65%). When discounting the planting group members, the proportion transferring was similar to the overall survey but the reasons were distributed differently: only 31% (or 37% discounting the planting group) had moved house compared with 50% in the overall survey, while both dissatisfied and 'other' reasons were given more frequently. The implication was that Moor Lane had not grown by transfer any more than other churches in the survey but that the reasons for transfer were different.

The ratio of those previously attending an Anglican church to non-Anglican was 1.4, which is very low. The reasons given for leaving were similar for both groups<sup>3</sup> unlike the result in the survey as a whole. The most important difference was that more Anglicans in this congregation were dissatisfied elsewhere, while fewer in both groups moved house.

Moor Lane church seemed to have picked up more occasional attenders (25% attended monthly or less previously compared with 11% in the survey overall) and made them more regular in attendance (0% are monthly or less compared with 7% in the survey overall). The regular attendance rate at previous churches was 74%, at Moor Lane it jumps to 94%. Of the nine who had been monthly or less frequent in attendance, six came from Anglican churches.

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<sup>2</sup> The incumbent in 1996 has suggested that "quite a few folk joined [Moor Lane] simply because of friendship/relationship - rather than a deliberate choice re style of worship." Letter from Revd John Dunnett, 23<sup>rd</sup> January 1996. Qualitative remarks of this nature are explored in the interviews discussed later in Part III. The interpretation in the text is the one supported by the survey results, in which the number giving friendship as a reason for joining was somewhat lower than in the survey as a whole (13% compared with 19%).

<sup>3</sup>  $\chi^2 = 0.95$ , with 2 degrees of freedom,  $p > 0.05$

The cross-tabulations show that the proportion converted was much higher, with over one quarter of the adults converted at the church compared with 16% in the whole survey.

It is not clear whether this is because of the way conversion has been described at Moor Lane, or that it demonstrated a real ability to reach beyond the existing boundaries of the church. The fact that the level of transfer growth is similar to the rest of the survey suggests that it is more likely to be the former, since high conversion growth rates seem to be correlated with lower transfer growth rates.

There was little difference in the pattern of reasons for joining between the periods 1-5 years previously and 6-10 years previously, except that half the more recent joiners gave style of worship as a reason. Compared with the survey as a whole this was a higher proportion. The high proportion responding converted was the same in both periods.

The lower proportion choosing their nearest church did not arise from those transferring church, but because only 11% of new attenders gave this reason compared with 26% in the survey overall (table 6.23). In fact, Moor Lane had a higher proportion moving house who chose them as the nearest church (55% compared with 50% overall). Nearly half the new attenders gave converted as a reason, higher than the survey mean of 33%, lowering the proportion who joined it as their nearest church. This suggests that in a parish with several nearby churches to choose from proximity of the building is less crucial.

Five people cited conversion after transfer from a previous church. This may be further evidence that there has been a view of conversion which set aside previous spiritual experience and has led to higher conversion rates. Four of those five had joined in the period 6-10 years ago.

On the basis of rather small numbers there is some evidence that the higher rate of transfer growth of people changing denomination occurred in the early period of the church plant, with a rate more typical of other Anglican churches more recently (1-5 years previously). In the more recent period 7 people joined from Anglican churches, 2 from non-Anglican.

This result seems to be further evidence of a greater attraction for those changing denomination to a church plant in its initial phase.

### 8.3 St Luke's, Cranham Park

The two congregations based in one building had a life of about 3 years (1991-4), as noted in the brief parish history (section 8.1). The survey came two years into that period, on 23rd May 1993, about a year after the previous vicar had left and before the appointment of a new one.

#### 8.3.1 Summary of the 9.15 a.m. congregation

The features which distinguish the 9.15 a.m. St Luke's congregation in this survey are:

- the unusual age structure, split between the 31-45 and 61+ age groups
- the levels of conversion 6-10 years earlier were higher, though that included people who had transferred into this congregation
- the strong and long-standing commitment to the congregation
- the very high number joining for style of worship in the preceding 10 years, dissatisfied elsewhere, often from another denomination
- the apparent stagnation in the growth of the congregation

#### 8.3.2 The 9.15 a.m. congregation survey results in more detail

A total of 68 forms were returned, 6 by young people, none by visitors. This is a high proportion of the count for 1993 of 77.5, a ratio of 80%, itself an indication of the strong commitment of those attending.

The age structure of the congregation was unusual, with no-one in the 16-30 age group; the 46-60 age group was also smaller than in the survey as a whole. The bulk of the congregation was fairly evenly split between the 31-45 and 61+ age groups, in total 77%, compared with 54% in the survey as a whole.

The number describing themselves as brought up as a Christian was less than half the proportion in the whole survey, and no one had become a Christian in the preceding year. Rather, there were more people converted 6-10 years ago and 20+ years before (nearly twice as many as in the whole survey). This seems to correspond to the age structure and the periods when people joined this church: no one had joined in the preceding year and the rate for 1-5 years previously was low. There was clearly a strong group of people with a long-standing commitment to this church.

People had joined this church particularly because of its style of worship, and, to some extent, for the preaching. This was especially true more recently, with about 60% joining in the previous 10 years citing worship. There were slightly more people responding that they had been converted at this church than in the whole survey.

The proportion transferring church was the same as in the whole survey, but more people had moved house. This result came about because nearly all those joining 11+ years before (17 out of 20) did so after a house move. By contrast, in the period 6-10 years earlier, there was more conversion growth, but a similar level of transfer growth; those who had transferred were very much more likely to have changed church because of dissatisfaction elsewhere and to change denomination. The link with joining for the style of worship was very clear (three-quarters of those unhappy elsewhere gave worship as a reason for joining).

As with Moor Lane, the ratio of Anglican to non-Anglican transfers was low, at 1.5. The lay pastor of the congregation, John Simmonds, commented that the influx of non-Anglicans had been large enough to have an impact on the styles of ministry adopted in the congregation. There was a spread of denominational backgrounds.

Everyone returning a form described themselves as a weekly attender, completing the picture of a highly committed, long-standing congregation, but which had become difficult to join.

### 8.3.3 Summary of the 11 a.m. congregation

The features which distinguish the 11 a.m. St Luke's congregation in this survey are:

- the equal number of men and women
- the unusual age structure, split between the 16-30 and 61+ age groups
- the levels of conversion 1-5 years earlier, and over 10 years earlier were higher than in the whole survey, and to the 9.15 a.m. congregation, but did not arise in this congregation, because of...
- the very high level of transfer growth, in the preceding 10 years, often because of dissatisfaction elsewhere
- the very high level of transfer from other denominations
- the very high numbers joining because of the style of worship and because of friendships

#### 8.3.4 The 11 a.m. congregation survey results in more detail

In total 52 forms were returned, 1 from a young person. The parish count in 1993 was 66, so the proportion of an average attendance responding was high at 77%.

This congregation had virtually equal numbers of men and women, unlike the 9.15 a.m. congregation and most in the survey. Unfortunately it was not possible to know if this reflected an especially high proportion of married couples in the congregation. The ages of those responding was also split in an unusual way, this time with higher numbers in the 16-30 and 61-75 age groups.

The length of time people had been Christians was also different to the survey as a whole and to some extent to the 9.15 congregation, with more people saying they had been Christians for 1- 5 years, 62% for more than 10 years (compared with 43% in the whole survey), and fewer in the other periods.

In the preceding year 7 people had joined this congregation, in contrast to the lack of new attenders at the 9.15 service. All these new attenders had transferred from other churches. In addition, there had been a large proportion joining the period 1 - 5 years before the survey. The proportion who had transferred church was very high at 71%. More than half had left because of dissatisfaction with their previous church, 2½ times the rate in the whole survey.

The reasons for dissatisfaction are suggested by the reasons for joining: they were less likely to cite the nearness of the church compared with the whole survey and the 9.15 congregation, and more likely to put style of worship, preaching, friendships, and interestingly, the provision for children.

Apparently cohering with these findings, more non-Anglicans (20) than Anglicans (15) had transferred church. Of the non-Anglicans, 8 had come from a local Baptist church, the others from various churches. Of those transferring only one person did not regard their previous frequency of attendance as weekly, showing a high level of commitment already.

Examining the results in more detail revealed that only 4 of the 31 people joining in the preceding 10 years had not transferred church. In other words, the transfer growth was 87% of all the growth in this period. Thus, although the church showed signs of growth and of attracting new attenders, it was in fact nearly all through transfers.

The variations over time in the reasons for joining and leaving were not very great, the main feature being an exaggerated version of that of the whole survey, that more than 20 years ago most people joined their nearest church, a proportion dropping to none in the year preceding the survey.

The comparison of reasons for joining and leaving showed that those who had not transferred had a similar profile of reasons for joining to that of the whole survey, suggesting that the mechanisms which encouraged new attenders were similar across very different churches.

Among those unhappy elsewhere there was an even higher proportion citing style of worship and preaching, while none of the 31 joined it as their nearest church. Of those moving house nearly half cited style of worship, and, more surprisingly, nearly half cited friendships.

Unlike the whole survey, Anglican and non-Anglican transferees had virtually identical reasons for leaving, one third because of a house move and just over half because of dissatisfaction.

The only period in the preceding 20 years in which more Anglicans than non-Anglicans had joined was the preceding year, after the departure of the incumbent. This may well be an indication of the extent to which his ministry brought about some of the more unusual features of the profiles of the two St Luke's congregations.

#### 8.4 Cranham Community Church

In the period before and during the survey the community church was led by a curate in the parish. It was started in 1986 with a church planting team of about 20 from St Luke's, joined by 12-15 people from a nearby Baptist church. The curate leading the planting team became the vicar of the parish in 1988 and another curate was appointed in 1989, four years before this survey. The congregation was therefore seven years old at the time of the survey.

##### 8.4.1 Community Church Summary

The features which distinguished the Community Church congregation in this survey were:

- the younger age structure, especially the higher number in the 16-30 age group
- the very high level of transfer growth, mainly because of dissatisfaction elsewhere
- the very high level of transfer from other denominations
- the high numbers joining because of the style of worship and preaching, especially the non-Anglicans, dissatisfied elsewhere

##### 8.4.2 The Community Church survey results in more detail

51 forms were returned, all from adults, on one Sunday in May 1993. Two came from visitors to the church. This is again a good response, just over three-quarters of the average attendance in 1993.

This congregation was much younger than found elsewhere: over one third were in the 16 - 30 age group, twice as many as in the survey as a whole. There was a fairly even number of men and women in all age groups, except the 46 - 60's, where there were three times as many women as men.

Over one fifth reported being brought up as Christians. An unusually high number reported being Christians for 6 - 10 years, 29%, nearly twice the survey average. The corresponding low point was that those reporting 20+ years as a Christian were half the survey average. These results clearly depend on the age structure of the congregation.

Only 6% had joined their nearest church, perhaps not surprising given the geographical proximity of the other Anglican congregations. Instead they had joined for the worship and the preaching, both reasons were given nearly twice as often as in the survey overall. Somewhat fewer people had been converted at the church.

The proportion who had transferred church was very high at 80%, reduced a little to 78% when taking out the church planting group. More of these people were from non-Anglican churches than Anglican, a ratio of 0.8; there was a particularly large group from a local Baptist church, where there had been disagreements over charismatic renewal. In view of these facts it is not surprising that the proportion who moved out of dissatisfaction elsewhere was twice the survey average, and the number who had moved house correspondingly lower.

The cross-tabulation of reasons for joining and leaving showed that more than three-quarters of those dissatisfied elsewhere gave worship as a reason for joining this church. These people were nearly all from non-Anglican backgrounds. The worship they were responding to was not traditional Anglican worship, though, but a charismatic, evangelical version.

In the period 6 - 10 years before the survey the only Anglicans joining were 3 in the church planting team, while 10 non-Anglicans joined at that time.

The church was led in this period by the same man who led the St Luke's congregations in the period 1 - 5 years before the survey. The same pattern of high non-Anglican transfers was found in those congregations at that period. It is quite clear that the very high rates of non-Anglican transfer were especially associated with his ministry. It is noteworthy that he subsequently left the Church of England.<sup>4</sup>

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<sup>4</sup> Since then he has had a change of approach in inner city Paris: "having been brought up on the belief that only a church drawn from one homogenous sociological unit could grow, I realised that



The final breakdown of transfer growth types shows that the congregation contained only half the number of Anglicans who had moved house, and nearly three times as many non-Anglicans who had not moved house, as in the survey as a whole. The Anglican result is explained by the availability of other Anglican congregations in the parish for people moving house; the non-Anglican result by the comments on worship.

### 8.5 Parish Summary

In the summary of the parish as a whole some comparisons are possible with a survey conducted two years previously in 1991. A Church Army officer in training, Paul Hamilton, was placed in the parish as part of his training. He surveyed the congregations at that time. It is important to note that this survey used different age groups and different periods for length of attendance at this church and for being a Christian. The wording of questions was similar. (This was one of the surveys used to construct the Wakefield survey.)

A total of 205 forms were returned from across the parish, but no breakdown into different congregations was given, nor was there any cross-tabulation of the answers to different questions. Slightly more people answered the 1993 Wakefield survey, 225 adults and 8 young people. Only 5 more women answered the 1993 survey, but 15 more men did.

This is a sign of the variability of respondents in such surveys. Specifically it means that the female/male ratio in the 1991 survey was about 1.5, but 1.2 in the 1993 survey.

Both surveys found a more elderly age structure than in the Wakefield survey as a whole, though the differences between the congregations was quite marked: the Community Church

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such a church was both an offence and an impossibility in Belleville." Charlie Cleverly *Anglicans for Renewal* Vol. 61 1995, p.5. This comment and the article illustrate how theology is shaped by context and experience.

was younger, the Moor Lane Church older. Compared with Anglican congregations more widely<sup>5</sup> the congregations were somewhat more youthful.

The rate of conversions and of transfers had slowed in all the congregations in the preceding year, after the departure of the incumbent. This was not a surprising result.

Examining reasons for joining, the relatively low rate of citing of nearness and high rates for worship and preaching were common across the parish. It is rather surprising that worship came quite low on the list of reasons in the 1991 survey, only 12% cited it, compared with 42% in this survey. There are some possible explanations: in the Wakefield survey more than one reason could be given, and more recent joiners gave worship as a reason. There was a slight verbal difference: the earlier survey had put 'enjoyable worship', the later one 'style of worship'. A possible explanation for the large difference is that for many people, the style of worship was an important second reason for joining.

The rate of transfers was the highest in the Wakefield survey (71% of all respondents), and especially high in the Community Church. The 1991 survey did not pick this up; this is because it asked:

"Did you leave another church to join this one?"

Only 56% answered 'yes', but the question may well have been answered 'no' by people had moved house and then joined this church. Although a few more people may have transferred in the two years between the surveys it would not be enough on its own to account for this difference.

Only at the 9.15 a.m. congregation at St Luke's had most people left their previous church because of a house move: this partly reflects its position as the established parish church and the length of attendance of many in that congregation. About a third of the other congregations had moved house, compared with half in the whole survey.

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<sup>5</sup> Using the 1989 MARC Europe data, table 6.4

The rate of non-Anglican transfers was high in all congregations, with some evidence that more recent joiners were more weighted to Anglicans. Comparison with the 1991 survey suggested that the non-Anglican joiners between 1991 and 1993 were mainly from Free Evangelical or House Church backgrounds.

This parish produced the highest stated frequency of attendance of the four in the present survey. It was also the only parish in which the present overall frequency of attendance was higher than the frequency of attendance transferees had had at their previous church. This was especially marked in the case of the Moor Lane congregation, with a large increase from 74% to 94%. None of the other congregations surveyed showed an increase of more than 8% points, and most were below 3%. The implication is that this parish has succeeded in creating a greater sense of commitment to its worshipping life.

To sum up, this parish created a very strong worshipping life, and sustained its attendance over the decade 1984-94, a period when attendance in the diocese as a whole declined by 9%.<sup>6</sup> The first church plant (Moor Lane) was the most successful in terms of attracting new attenders and increasing the commitment of fringe attenders from elsewhere. The Community Church and the St Luke's congregations made their gains in attendance through transfer growth, often of people dissatisfied with another local congregation.

The evidence from this parish was that church planting had been only a partial success in mission terms, and that much of the growth was due to its approach to worship, attracting Christians from elsewhere.

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<sup>6</sup> Details in table 5.1

## Chapter Nine

### Hawkwell

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## 9.1 Brief parish history

### 9.1.1 History of church planting

The parish of Hawkwell is an ancient one. The present parish church, St Mary's, was built in the 14th and 15th centuries.<sup>1</sup> In this century another church was opened, Emmanuel, to serve newer housing at one edge of the parish. Over time this church grew and the congregation at St Mary's dwindled.<sup>2</sup>

The growth of Emmanuel encouraged the desire to plant a new congregation on the other side of the parish, about 3 km away, again in an area of still newer housing. This church plant occurred in 1986 and has met in school buildings. It is called Golden Cross Community Church.<sup>3</sup>

A second plant was done into the parish church in December 1989. This is properly regarded as a church plant, since there was no morning service in the building, and a planting team was sent from Emmanuel.

### 9.1.2 History of recent attendances

During the period covered by the official attendance figures there is no evidence of growth in attendance, with the highest attendance rate being reached in 1987. There appear to be peaks in attendance after each of the church plants, that is in 1987 and 1991, followed by a decline. Unfortunately it was not possible to obtain figures of attendance at the individual congregations.

The average attendances as returned to the diocese are recorded in table 9.1:

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<sup>1</sup> C. T. Tait *The Parish Churches of South East Essex*, p.60

<sup>2</sup> The first ten years of Higton's incumbency are described anecdotally in his book *That The World May Believe*

<sup>3</sup> Considerable help was given by Revd Andrew Edmunds, then minister of Golden Cross church, in setting up the survey and answering my queries. The main interview took place on 17th November 1992. He moved to another parish in 1995.

Table 9.1 Average Attendances, Hawkwell, 1984-96

Year	Parish Count <sup>4</sup>	% Decadal Change
1984	253	-
1985	229	-
1986	240	-
1987	275	-
1988	225	-
1989	233	-
1990	250	-
1991	266	-
1992	249	-
1993	225	-
1994	190	-24.9
1995	221	-3.5
1996	206	-15.0

Each congregation is now discussed in turn. The full tables have been given to the churches concerned. The discussion particularly draws attention to results which vary from the survey as a whole.

## 9.2 Emmanuel Church

The present incumbent, Revd Tony Higton, has been at Emmanuel since 1975. The church has become well known nationally, and to some extent internationally, through the work of Tony Higton on General Synod and through ABWON<sup>5</sup> and Time Ministries, based at the church. During the period 1985-94 Higton “exercised general oversight of the parish” while ministering elsewhere for much of the time.<sup>6</sup>

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<sup>4</sup> These are the average attendance figures submitted to the diocese each year on the same basis as the other parishes.

<sup>5</sup> ABWON is Action for a Biblical Witness to Our Nation

<sup>6</sup> Private letter from Tony Higton, received 11<sup>th</sup> March 1996.

The impression of Edmunds was that the publicity probably led to a greater degree of transfer growth at Emmanuel than at the church plant, Golden Cross. This belief is tested in the survey.

### 9.2.1 Emmanuel Summary

The features which distinguish Emmanuel church in this survey are:

- the extent to which women outnumbered men in the congregation
- few adults in the congregation said that they had been brought up as Christians
- they were more likely to have joined because they had been converted through the church and less likely because it was their nearest church
- a somewhat lower rate of transfer growth, though where it occurred it was of people already very committed to church attendance
- twice as many of those transferring were from non-Anglican churches as from Anglican

### 9.2.2 Emmanuel church survey results in more detail

Forms were filled in by 103 adults at this congregation and 21 young people. The forms were filled in on 2<sup>nd</sup> May 1993. Three were filled in by visitors.

There were far more women than men responding to the survey, in the ratio of over 2.4. This is much higher than in the rest of the survey, and considerably higher than was found for Anglican churches generally in the 1989 MARC Europe survey<sup>7</sup>, where the ratio was 1.8.

The members of this congregation were slightly younger than generally in the Wakefield survey, and therefore significantly younger than those in the national survey. In all age groups except the 16-30 year olds the imbalance between men and

women was more marked than in the survey as a whole. The greatest difference was in the 31-45 year old group: in the whole survey the female/male ratio for this age group was 1.5, in this congregation it was 2.0. In fact a quarter of the forms from this church were returned by women in this age group.

People at Emmanuel were more likely to give a specific time when they had been converted, compared with the survey as a whole. Only 12% said they had been brought up as a Christian, compared with 25% in the whole survey.<sup>8</sup> The rate of conversion was particularly marked in the period 6-10 years before the survey.

The period 6-20 years before the survey saw a higher rate of joining than in the survey as a whole, the other periods a lower rate. This was especially so in the preceding year, when the annual rate of joining at Emmanuel was 5%, compared with 13% in the survey as a whole.

People were much less inclined to join because this was the nearest church than in the survey overall (13% compared with 31%), and somewhat less likely to join for the style of worship (19% compared with 28%). They were slightly more likely to join because of friendships (23% compared with 19%) and considerably more likely because they were converted at Emmanuel (26% compared with 15%).

In line with the high proportion stating that they had been converted at the church, the proportion who had transferred from another church was lower than in the survey as a whole (55% compared with 65%). This was the lowest transfer growth rate of the larger churches in the survey; only one small church plant had a lower transfer growth rate. Of those who had transferred, there was an unusually high number who gave 'other' reasons than house move or dissatisfaction elsewhere. In part this was because of the use of phrases like "called by God", used by 4 respondents.

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<sup>7</sup> See chapter 6, table 6.4



The ratio of those previously attending an Anglican church to non-Anglican was 0.5, which was the lowest ratio of any congregation in the survey. It means that less than one third of those transferring were from Anglican churches, a result which is unusual in this survey, and in the MARC Europe surveys, discussed in chapter 2. Nearly as many Baptists as Anglicans joined, and there were a substantial number from Free Evangelical churches. This ratio persisted for a 20 year period. As a result, more than one third of the congregation had been attending a non-Anglican church, compared with one fifth in the survey as a whole, a proportion which in itself is probably higher than in Anglican churches generally.

The reasons given for leaving were very different for the two groups, to an even greater extent than the result in the survey as a whole. Nearly all the Anglicans had transferred because of a house move, while the non-Anglicans gave 'other' reasons.

As a result, the congregation had more new converts, less Anglican transfers and more non-Anglican transfers than in the other congregations surveyed. The perception of Edmunds that Emmanuel had grown more by transfers is therefore inaccurate, but perhaps a reflection of the difference made to the ethos with such a high proportion of non-Anglicans transferring.

One marked feature of the people transferring was the very high regular attendance rate at previous churches (98%); unlike other congregations, virtually all those transferring claimed a weekly attendance at their previous church. The implication is that Emmanuel attracted people already highly committed to church attendance.

An additional question was asked about where people lived: this revealed that 41% of the adults lived in Hawkwell and a further 38% in Hockley. This is not surprising since Hockley is the neighbouring Anglo-Catholic parish and Emmanuel is situated

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<sup>8</sup> Half the young people said they had been raised as Christians, somewhat higher than in the rest of the survey. An interesting example of the generation gap, and the second generation theory.

about 100 metres from the parish boundary. A little more surprising are the 9% of adults who lived in Rayleigh, the parish on the far-side of Hockley, and with an evangelical Anglican church.

### 9.3 Golden Cross Community Church, Hawkwell

The Golden Cross congregation was planted from Emmanuel in October 1986, with a large team of 50 adults, under the leadership of Revd Andrew Edmunds. In November 1992, he stated that the membership was about 65 adults, with a higher attendance on a Sunday. This was given as 90 adults; comparison with their other figures suggests this may have been a reasonable estimate of the number of adults who attended at some time, rather than an average attendance figure.

Because of the continuity of minister and the records he had kept, he provided his own table of gains and losses to membership over the 6 year period:

Table 9.2 Gains and losses to membership, Golden Cross, Hawkwell, 1986-92

	Gains		Losses
Converted	22	Lapsed	3
Transferred in	11	Moved house	6
-	-	Moved church	15
Biological*	7	-	-
<b>Totals</b>	40		24

\*The biological growth was not measured by births, but by young people reaching the age of 16.

These figures would indicate twice as many people were converted as transferred church. As will be seen in the survey results this was not borne out in people's self-

assessment, although the conversion rate was high compared with the survey as a whole.

The high proportion leaving for other churches is also noteworthy, though the reasons are not known.

### 9.3.1 Golden Cross Summary

The features which distinguish the Golden Cross congregation in this survey were:

- very few people said they had been brought up as Christians
- people joined because of friendships, not because it was their nearest church
- as many non-Anglicans as Anglicans had transferred in
- an eclectic congregation

### 9.3.2 Survey results in more detail

A total of 73 forms were returned, 21 by young people, 3 by visitors. The 49 returned by adult attenders is a useful proportion (70%) of a stated count for 1993 of 70.<sup>9</sup>

The age structure of the congregation was similar to the survey as a whole, though slightly younger. The balance between men and women was more even, though the female/male ratio was still 1.4.

Only 5 adults described themselves as brought up as a Christian (10%), even fewer than the proportion at Emmanuel.

People had joined this church particularly because of friendships (27% compared with 19% overall). There were more people responding that they had been converted at

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<sup>9</sup> This figure was given by Edmunds but could not be confirmed by Higton.

this church than in the whole survey (19% compared with 15%). They were much less likely to join because it was their nearest church (17% compared with 31% overall). The pattern of joining was very much through a network of relationships, which is not surprising when meeting in premises not dedicated to church use.

The proportion transferring church was the same as in the whole survey, but it came about because one third of the whole congregation had wanted to be involved in church planting. All those who gave church planting as their reason for joining were from an Anglican church, most likely to be the planting church, Emmanuel. They had not all joined at the same time, and only 3 out of 11 regarded themselves as part of the planting team. The implication of the transfer growth figures is that this has not been a successful church plant, in terms of attracting new church attenders. This confirms in more detail the picture given by the simple figure on the level of numerical growth from 1986 to 1992.

The ratio of Anglican to non-Anglican transfers was 2.3, apparently not much lower than in the survey as a whole. However, if the people who transferred because of church planting are disregarded, this ratio was 1.1, a very low figure. In the main period of the life of this congregation, 1-5 years before the survey, the ratio was as low as 0.9, even including 3 Anglicans who transferred from the planting church. Without them, the ratio was only 0.4, that is 3 Anglicans and 7 non-Anglicans.

This result is similar to that of Moor Lane church, Cranham Park, where in the early phase more non-Anglicans had joined. (See chapter 8, section 2.) As it happens, only one person had transferred to Golden Cross in the year preceding the survey, and that person came from an Anglican church.

Rather surprisingly, the Golden Cross congregation was more eclectic than that at Emmanuel. Only 29% of the adults lived in Hawkwell; a further 35% came Rochford, the parish next to the school where the congregation meets. In addition,

37% travelled from further afield. This would seem to be a reflection of the network of friendships which led to people joining the church.

#### 9.4 St Mary's Church

The ancient parish church is situated a little way from the main housing now in the parish, and its congregation had dwindled as other churches were started. However, the church growth philosophy of the parish and a legacy for building work on the church led to sending a church planting team to St Mary's in 1989. The team consisted of 30 adults, in 2 house groups.

##### 9.4.1 St Mary's Church Summary

The features which distinguish the St Mary's congregation in this survey were:

- twice as many women as men in the congregation
- the greater length of Christian life
- the impact at the time of the survey of those motivated by church planting, 14 adults in the original team, and 4 more since, out of 27 respondents
- no converts; no transferees dissatisfied elsewhere; no non-Anglicans

##### 9.4.2 Survey results in more detail

34 forms were returned, 27 from adults, 7 from young people on Sunday 2nd May 1993. Two came from visitors to the church. This was an excellent response, since there were 29 adults and 10 children present at the service that day.

The ages in this congregation were similar to those in the other churches in the survey. However, there were twice as many women as men, a ratio which was the same for the church planting team and for those who had joined subsequently.

Less than one fifth reported being brought up as Christians, compared with a quarter in the whole survey. An unusually high number reported being Christians for 11-20 years, 43%, more than twice the survey average, 11 of the 27 adults replying. Two-thirds of the respondents said they had been a Christian for 11 years or more. This is much higher than in the survey as a whole, and reflects on the length of Christian experience of the church planting team. Over half the congregation said they were part of that team, while another 30% had joined since the plant, including 4 who wanted to be involved in church planting.

It is noteworthy that 33% had joined their nearest church; this is only just above the rate for the survey as a whole, but it is twice the rate in the other congregations in this parish. This reason was given by 4 of the church planting team and 4 of the 8 new attenders. The church planting team also joined for the worship and the preaching. Four of the 5 people who had moved house also gave those reasons for joining. No-one had been converted at this church by the time of the Wakefield survey.

The proportion who had transferred church was 70%, perhaps lower than might be expected given the size of the church planting group. All were Anglicans, unlike the other congregations in Hawkwell. All the other people who transferred church had also moved house.

The numbers involved are small, but of those who had not transferred church, 2 had belonged to St Mary's for more than 10 years, while 3 had joined since the church plant. Although 8 people altogether had joined, it is those 3 who represent a real gain to church attendance.

Virtually every-one came from Hawkwell (59%) or Hockley (30%).

### 9.5 Parish Summary

One of the most interesting results from Hawkwell is the extent and nature of the transfer growth: the perception is of a parish drawing in many outsiders, yet apart from one small congregation in Billericay, Emmanuel had the **lowest** transfer growth rate of any of the congregations surveyed. At the same time, Emmanuel also had a very high rate of non-Anglican transfers (36% of the congregation had changed denomination, compared with 21% as a whole). It was almost certainly the effect of so many non-Anglicans joining which made transfer growth more obvious.

The transfer growth rate across the parish was 60%, about the same as Billericay, but that includes the church planting teams. If they are disregarded, the rate drops to 50%. It is possible that some of the church planting team members had transferred to Emmanuel, before joining a church planting team, but it remains the case that overall this parish had less transfer growth than the other two in the survey.

However, there has been little new growth at the church plants, despite considerable effort and time. It is possible that the space created at Emmanuel has enabled new people to join there, but there is no evidence of a greater rate of joining in the 5 years prior to the survey.

The impression from this survey was of a parish which has had considerable success at times in growth through evangelism and gaining new attenders at the main congregation. However, up to the point of this survey, church planting had not succeeded in providing a significant dynamic of growth.

## Chapter Ten

### Highwoods, Colchester

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### 10.1 Brief parish history

The parish of St John the Evangelist was formed in 1863. During the ministry of the incumbent, Revd Brian Nicholson, the attendance at the church has increased considerably.<sup>1</sup> For example, the ten year period 1984-94 shows the official count returned to the diocese nearly doubling from 155 to 298. As can be seen from table 10.1 below, there have also been years when quite large decreases have occurred. However, taken as a whole, this parish has had the most consistent growth in attendance in the diocese of Chelmsford during the period for which detailed figures are available.<sup>2</sup>

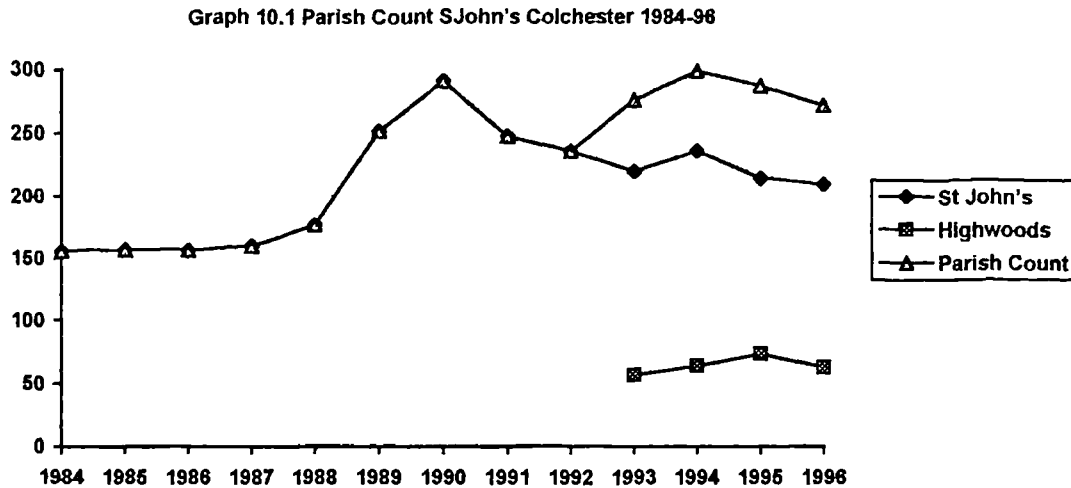
As in other parishes, the growth of St John's encouraged the desire to plant a new congregation on an estate called Highwoods. The church plant started weekly services in 1992, and returned a count for the first time in 1993.

Table 10.1 Average Attendances, St John's Colchester, 1984-96

Year	St John's	Highwoods	Parish Count	% Decadal Change
1984	155	-	155	-
1985	156	-	156	-
1986	156	-	156	-
1987	159	-	159	-
1988	176	-	176	-
1989	251	-	251	-
1990	290	-	290	-
1991	247	-	247	-
1992	235	-	235	-
1993	219	56	275	-
1994	235	63	298	+92
1995	213	73	286	+83
1996	209	62	271	+74

<sup>1</sup> Brian Nicholson moved to another parish in October 1996.

<sup>2</sup> This was commented on in chapter 5.2.



As is clear from the table and the graph, the main period of growth in attendance occurred between 1988 and 1990. The attendance at St John's then fell away quite rapidly; it is possible that without the church plant that the attendance in the parish would have continued to decline. Following the church plant in October 1992 there was renewed growth to about the level reached in 1990. Two years of slight decline followed, a pattern seen in other parishes after the initial church planting period.

The incumbent gave the following reasons for the increase between 1988 and 1990<sup>3</sup>: a building project at St John's which caused an increase in the prayer life of the church; during re-building work "the services became less traditional and more open to the Holy Spirit"; the church attracted new attenders and Christians moving into the rapidly expanding Highwoods estate; a Town Mission in 1990.

Of these reasons for the growth in attendance, it is not clear that the Town Mission in October 1990 achieved a lasting effect since the attendance was down in April/May 1991. The other reasons, including the increase in population, could all have played a part, but it is not known how much of the growth at St John's was transfer growth and how much conversion growth.

The full survey tables have been given to the current leadership of Highwoods church. The following discussion draws attention to results which vary from the survey as a whole.

<sup>3</sup> In a letter from Deborah Akehurst, Highwoods church administrator, 1/8/96

## 10.2 Highwoods Church

Highwoods is a modern estate of mixed housing, begun in 1982 on what had been farmland. There are about 2,300 homes, varying from 1 bedroom starter homes to 5 bedroom detached homes. There are also homes provided by a housing association and a hospice.

The church plant began weekly services in October 1992 and meets in primary school buildings. It started with a team of about 55 adults.<sup>4</sup> The survey was carried out a year later when the regular attendance had settled down to about 50 adults and 30 children. Early on there had been visitors from other churches, giving an attendance of up to 80 adults, but these people were discouraged from joining.

There was an increased average attendance from 1993 to 1995 from 56 adults to 73, an increase of 30%, during a period when attendances in the rest of the diocese were static or in decline. Some of the losses between 1995 and 1996 can be attributed to the ill-health of the minister at Highwoods, on sick leave from October 1995. In addition, a significant number of the original core group were stated to have moved away from the area.

### 10.2.1 Highwoods Summary

The features which distinguish Highwoods church in this survey are:

- the concentration of respondents in the 31-45 age group
- joining their nearest church, and for its provision for children
- a high number of non-Anglicans transferring in

### 10.2.2 Survey results in more detail

Forms were filled in by 57 adults at this congregation and no young people. The forms were filled in on 3<sup>rd</sup> October 1993. Three were filled in by visitors. This is a good proportion (84%) of the 68 adults attending that day.

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<sup>4</sup> Initial information supplied by Revd Margaret Corstophine, the first minister of the church plant, by telephone on 23<sup>rd</sup> June 1993.

There were more women than men responding to the survey, in the ratio of 1.9. This is higher than in the rest of the Wakefield survey, and slightly higher than was found for Anglican churches generally in the 1989 MARC Europe survey where the ratio was 1.8. It may relate to the fact that this was the only church in the survey with a female leader, but it was not the highest female/male ratio of the survey.

The ages of the members of this congregation were bunched in the 31-45 age group, with 56% between these ages, compared with 35% in the survey as a whole. In this age group the imbalance between men and women was less marked, at 1.5, than in the other age groups.

People at Highwoods were slightly more likely to give a specific time when they had been converted, compared with the survey as a whole. 19% said they had been brought up as a Christian, compared with 25% in the whole survey.

Rather surprisingly only 14 people said they had joined with the planting group. It is not clear whether this is because people misunderstood the question or because their own self-understanding was different to that of the church leadership, which reckoned on a planting group of 55 adults. Even adding those who gave church planting as a reason for joining only added another 8 individuals. This may suggest that fewer people had church planting as a high personal priority than the leadership thought.

Over half the people joined because this was the nearest church, a result matched only by Christ Church, Billericay. They were more likely to join because of provision for children (14%; overall 8%) perhaps a reflection of the number of children in the planting group.

The proportion who had transferred from another church was much higher than in the survey as a whole (89% compared with 65%). This arose from the large initial team and only a few people joining in the first year of the new church. Of those who had transferred, only 3 said they had been dissatisfied with a previous church: as in the other church plants in the survey it was not made up of malcontents from elsewhere. Interestingly, nearly half said they had moved house, close to the result in the survey as a whole: given the number of people who

joined from St John's this may refer to the church move into St John's, rather than into Highwoods. This caveat also applies to the comment on the previous denomination.

The ratio of those previously attending an Anglican church to non-Anglican was 1.5, low compared with national results but not unusual compared with the other church plants in this survey. The non-Anglicans were mainly from Baptist or Free Evangelical churches. Unusually two-thirds of the non-Anglicans had moved house. This was even higher than the Anglican figure because more of them gave church planting as their reason for leaving.

The survey suggests that the church plant was made up of two main groups: people moving from the planting congregation, and church attenders moving into the area for the new houses. This second group had a wide spread of previous denominational backgrounds.

Of the six people who had not attended another church immediately before, five had joined because it was their nearest church; friendship was also important, cited by 4 of this group.

Two people stated that they were not Christians; the minister at the time, Margaret Corstophine, reckoned that there were at least eight people present who were not Christians. Perhaps some did not fill in a form, but it is also another indication of the difference in perception that can occur between ministers and laity.

### 10.3 Parish Summary

In the context of a diocese and a denomination nationally showing declining attendance figures this parish achieved significant growth. At least some of that growth was related to the large increase in population in the parish.

The initial experience of church planting was an increase in attendance at the planted church, and fairly steady attendance at the planting church. Checking the future progress of the parish will be complicated by the ill-health of one minister and the departure of the incumbent. Thus far the church planting in this parish has been moderately successful, but further monitoring and research would be needed before a clearer answer could be given.

## Chapter Eleven

### Using the survey results from individual congregations to assess church planting

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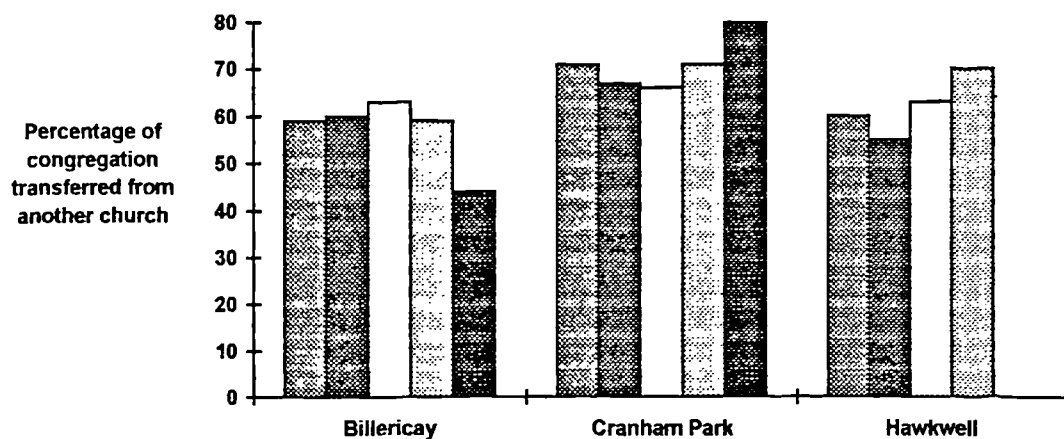
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The main comparisons in this summary chapter are made between the three parishes of Billericay, Cranham Park and Hawkwell, and the eleven congregations in these parishes at the time of the survey. It is particularly useful in assessing the congregations created through church planting.

The chapter may be regarded as a simple form of qualitative interview with the congregations. The figures for each parish and congregation are taken from the relevant chapters of this thesis.

### 11.1 Comparisons on levels of transfer growth

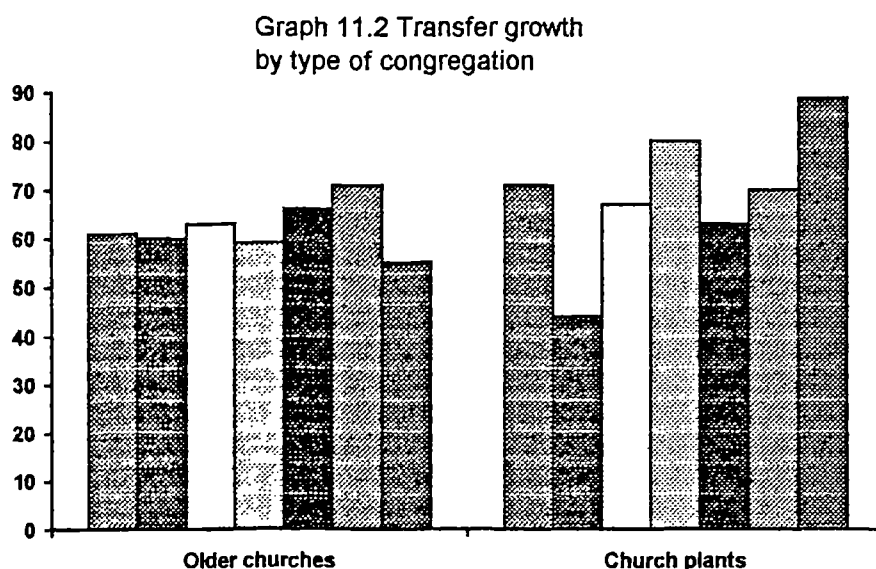
The levels of transfer growth vary considerably between the congregations from 44% at St John's Billericay, to 80% at the Community Church Cranham Park. This is the proportion in each church which said they had belonged to another church immediately before the present one.



The first column in each block is the average for that parish; the other columns show the percentage for each congregation

Graph 11.1 illustrates the variation on the level of transfer growth within each parish as well as between the parishes. The first column for each parish is the rate of transfer growth in the parish as a whole. Overall, Billericay and Hawkwell had about 60% transfer growth, Cranham Park 70%.

The more recent church plants tended to have higher levels of transfer growth, partly because of the number of people from the planting team. Graph 11.2 below illustrates the variations within the categories. The first column in each group is the average level of transfer growth.



The average level of transfer growth for older established churches was 61%, for church plants it was 71%. The standard deviations were 5.6 and 15.4 respectively. This implies a much greater similarity between established churches than between church plants, when assessed by transfer growth.

The following graphs, 11.3 and 11.4, make the same comparisons for transfer growth from other denominations into these Anglican congregations. The data is limited but suggests that the level of this type of growth is more a feature of a particular parish than it is of church planting as such. The parish of Billericay showed a pattern similar to that of other Anglican churches in the surveys discussed in chapter 2, while the other parishes had much higher rates of transfer growth from other denominations.

The case studies in chapter 4 also showed very different results on the level of transfer growth from other denominations: in the case of Springfield church it was high, in the case of the plants in Cramlington it was low, though one plant showed evidence of an increase of such transfers in its second year.



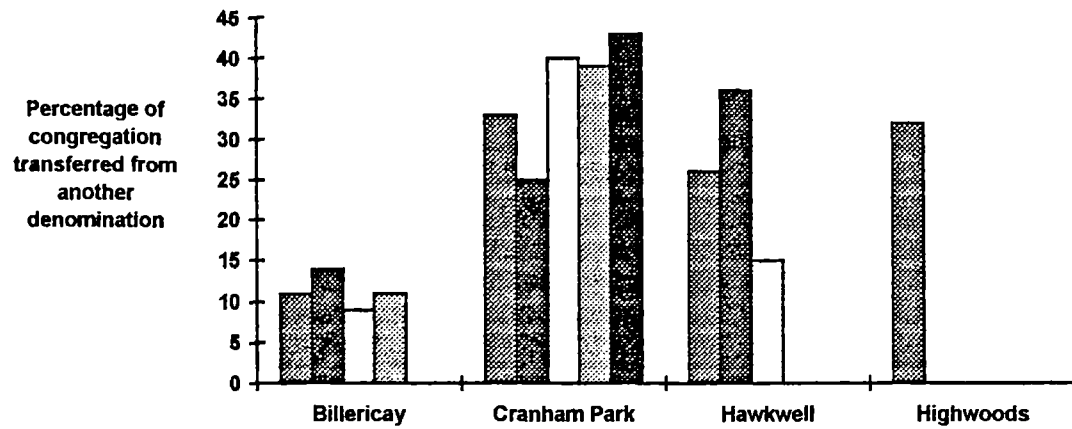
This observation was also tested by calculating the standard deviation of the percentage transfer growth from another denomination for each parish and for the two congregation types.

Table 11.1 Standard deviation of transfer growth from another denomination

Parish/Congregation type	Standard deviation
Billericay	6.0
Cranham Park	8.0
Hawkwell	18.0
Older churches	14.9
Church plants	17.4

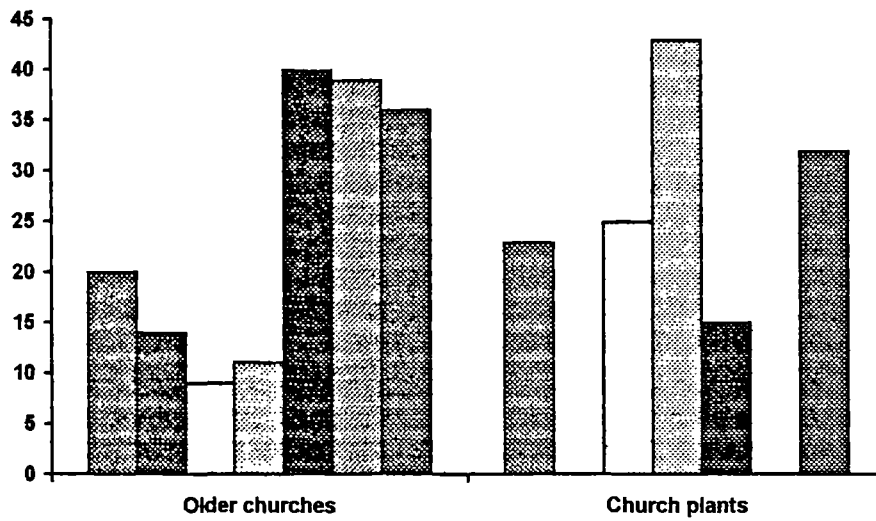
The s.d. in the case of Hawkwell is high because of a new church plant, which had not had time to develop. Otherwise, the figures confirm the visual impression, that there is more similarity within a parish than within the groups of long established churches and of church plants.

Graph 11.3 Transfer growth from another denomination by congregation



The first column in each block is the average for that parish; the other columns show the percentage for each congregation

Graph 11.4 Transfer growth from another denomination by type of congregation



### 11.2 Comparison of reasons for joining and leaving

The tendency for congregations in one parish to share characteristics was also observable in the reasons people gave for joining a congregation.

For example, in Billericay, joining the nearest church was the most frequently given reason in all four congregations. In Cranham Park the most frequently given reason was style of worship and the three highest ratings of preaching came from this parish. The reasons for joining at Hawkwell were a little less clear cut but were more to do with friendship and conversion, probably also reflecting the lower rate of transfer growth there.

By contrast, it was not possible to find a common thread of reasons in the groups of long established churches and of church plants in this survey. It would therefore seem to be evidence of the importance of parish ethos, over any specifically church planting ethos.

There was much less consistency within parishes about the reasons people gave for leaving a previous church: in the case of Billericay the differences between congregations would have been statistically insignificant except for one very different result in the smallest congregation. For Cranham Park and Hawkwell the variation between the congregations was significant in this regard.

This last observation does not invalidate the finding of a general parish ethos, for the ethos is inevitably more about the positive reasons for choosing a particular congregation.

### 11.3 Growth in church plants

In the parishes surveyed in detail and in the two case studies of chapter 4, it seems clear that most of the net growth in attendance occurred in the first 2 years of the life of the church plant. After that the processes of joining and leaving quickly come to resemble those of long established churches, and the initial growth in attendance then dropped back a little.

This phenomenon has been remarked upon by Clarke in describing what he calls “the story of many church plants”. He goes on: “There is much enthusiasm, and there is some initial growth as some receptive contacts are drawn in. After a while, though, things settle down and the church hits a ceiling.”<sup>1</sup>

The results of the Wakefield survey suggest that the church plants will have many of the characteristics of the planting church, often in ways in which are not immediately apparent, and therefore will share many of the same strengths and weaknesses. Where a church plant has initial net growth but soon plateaus the reasons will best be sought across the parish as a whole, and not focussed on the plant. In any case, the planting church itself will probably be showing the same pattern.

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<sup>1</sup> Clarke *Evangelism that really works*, p.124-5

### 11.4 Summary

There are two main conclusions which arise from the comparison of the church plants in the Wakefield survey and the case studies of chapter 4:

Firstly, on the evidence of

1. levels of overall transfer growth,
2. transfer growth from other denominations,
3. reasons people give for joining a particular congregation

it is suggested that church plants are often more like their planting church than other church plants.

This inheriting of ecclesiological models by church plants has been highlighted in Lings' work on ecclesiology and church planting. As he puts it, "*All planters need to recognise that every plant has an implicit ecclesiology, inherited from its sponsoring body and the attitudes of its own members.*"<sup>2</sup> In Lings work this is an observation based on visits to church plants and discussions with those involved; what is offered here is a complementary approach, based on the responses of individuals.

Secondly, the church plants studied showed real, and in some cases, dramatic net growth in the first 2 years after they had been planted, but soon began to resemble longer established Anglican congregations where rates of joining and leaving were usually more in balance.

It tends to imply that church plants tend to reach a steady state quite soon after foundation, and if continued numerical growth is the goal then further planting may well be necessary.

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<sup>2</sup> Lings *Anglican Church Plants*, p.108

## Part III

### How individuals describe finding a church

## Chapter Twelve

### Mass-Observation survey of 1949

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## 12.1 Motivations and Methods of the Survey

In 1949 the religious newspaper *British Weekly* published a series of articles<sup>1</sup> on the motivations of church attenders, including the choice of one church over against another. The survey work was undertaken by Mass-Observation and incorporated other surveys of their own, previously published in various daily newspapers.

This survey does not seem to have been previously analysed in any academic work, yet contains much of continuing value in the study of church attendance. It is therefore described in some detail here in order to learn from it and to make comparisons with the qualitative interviewing undertaken for the present thesis.

The Mass-Observation survey arose from a concern about the decline in church attendance from the levels that existed before the 1939-45 war and sought to answer the following questions:

“How much do we know, even we who are ourselves churchgoers, about other people who go to church, why they go, and what their attendance means to them?”

“How recently have you, each single reader, how recently have I, tried honestly to answer why we still sit in our pews Sunday after Sunday, when so many of the people in our world remain outside? What effects can we trace to our maintaining our attendance?”<sup>2</sup>

This fascinating series enables us to make some comparison with reasons given for church attendance nearly 50 years later, and why one church might be chosen in preference to another. There are some statistics in the reports and it seeks to illuminate the statistics with

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<sup>1</sup> These articles were sent to Prof. Gill by Leonard England in response to Gill's book *The Myth of the Empty Church*.

<sup>2</sup> *British Weekly* 6<sup>th</sup> January 1949 “People who come to church” (note that only photocopies of the original articles were available; page numbers are not visible on these copies)

interviews: “to discover something of the personal reality behind the bare answers of those who reply affirmatively to the question whether they go to church”.<sup>3</sup>

Though the term is not used, much of the survey is qualitative interviewing on a large scale, all based in the London area. The more detailed interviews have not included Roman Catholics, though they are included in the national statistics. The statistical results from earlier surveys are based mainly on a national sample of 2,000 people, and in some cases of 6,000.

The approach is sociological, rather than theological, since they assume “It is true that most church-goers have the same bed-rock belief in God”<sup>4</sup>. At the simplest level this is probably accurate: surveys during the 20<sup>th</sup> century show a clear correlation between belief in a personal God and regular church attendance.<sup>5</sup> In context, though, this comment seems to be used as a justification for a sociological approach. The acceptability of this approach was likely to be in doubt to the readership of this newspaper.

The methods used can be summarised as follows:

1. A re-analysis and correlation of previous surveys, originally done for the *Daily Graphic* and the *Daily Telegraph* newspapers
2. Inquiries of Mass-Observation’s National Panel, “who regularly and at length submit answers to questions, in a form that penetrates beneath the surface-level of opinion”.
3. “Long informal interviews ... with church leaders and members of various congregations, and house-to-house interviews ... with people living near certain churches.”
4. “Postal questionnaires ... sent to both ministers and members of congregations for detailed comments on church and parish life.”

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<sup>3</sup> *ibid.*

<sup>4</sup> *ibid.*

<sup>5</sup> see Gill *forthcoming*



5. "Certain churches have been studied in detail, particularly those with active congregations and those in which special experiments are now going on."<sup>6</sup>

## 12.2 Key Findings of the Survey

The findings of the survey were published in five further weekly parts, with helpful summaries or "Findings in Brief" in the first four of these articles, the fifth article itself acting as a summary of the series. The text of the articles gave more detailed evidence and illustrations of the Findings. This section of the thesis describes the reported Findings; section 12.3 that follows examines their relevance 50 years on.

The first article in the series described the bewilderment of ministers about the motivations of those attending church. It goes on to assert that the research will help to overcome that bewilderment. The research described in the first two articles focussed mainly on why people attended a church, and in the third and fourth articles on why a particular church was attended.

### 12.2.1 Why do people go to church?

The summary given in Part 1 made four main points about reasons for church attendance. They are quoted here in full, partly to give the flavour and nuances of the language used.

1. "Although there is today virtually no reason for retaining the habit of churchgoing without religious conviction, professed belief in God does not, in general, lead to churchgoing unless the habit of going to church, and not merely to Sunday school, is formed early in life.
2. Although few people today make a first beginning in church attendance after they are twenty, many who have "lapsed" for longer or shorter periods return later in life. Of those who experience a religious renewal after a break in church attendance, a high proportion do so as the result of the impact of some other

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<sup>6</sup> all from *British Weekly* 6<sup>th</sup> January 1949

presentation of the faith than that of the denomination in which they have been brought up.

3. Comparatively few churchgoers maintain the practice unbroken throughout their lives. Of those who do, many tell of a "conversion", or some point at which they passed from comfortable habit to intense conviction. The commonest age for the occurrence of spiritual crisis among these is "very late teens or early twenties".
4. People who return to church are generally won back as the result of personal contact, and at least as often by personal friends or lay visitors as by ministers. There is great need for more personal bridges between ministers and the majority of the population who do not go to church."<sup>7</sup>

The key factor in attendance was not belief on its own, but belief combined with the habit at an early age of attending church and that it had "fundamentally pleasant associations".

They also found that most people had periods in their lives where they did not attend church, and even those who did have continuous attendance often had a "conversion" experience which marked a turning point from habitual attendance to one based also on conviction. This was often associated with a change in denomination, and half the sample (unfortunately it is not clear which sample is being referred to) were "now members of a denomination different from that in which they were brought up", though it was frequently a move from one Free Church to another.

There were 50 people on the Mass-Observation National Panel who were described as "actively religious". The importance of early habits is illustrated by the fact that only 2 of these fifty people had not attended church meetings of any kind when young. The influence of parents was also the most important factor cited by people in their religious upbringing, being mentioned more than twice as often as any other factor.

In joining a church as an adult, personal contact with a church attender was frequently the key to re-establishing the habit of attendance. Belief or renewal of belief could come later, and did not seem to require the same personal contact.

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<sup>7</sup> *British Weekly* 13<sup>th</sup> January 1949 "Why DO People Come to Church?"

### 12.2.2 Who was going to church?

In part 2 the social make-up of church attenders was described, though the statistics were not always quoted very clearly. They quote several surveys by other groups and individuals which lead them to assert that 15-20% of the adult population were attending church regularly. 'Regularly' was defined as weekly attendance. It is mainly this group of people that was described by this survey.

Overall, they found church attenders evenly distributed by age, education and income. However, there were differences between the sexes, regions and denominations.

The ratio of women to men was 58:42 amongst the regular church attenders. It is interesting to note that in 1950 Gorer found that 23% of adults claimed monthly attendance, with a female/male ratio of 62:38. Had the balance shifted or were there more women among the less regular attenders in the earlier survey?

A previous survey for the *Daily Graphic* newspaper found a claimed attendance in the last month as London 28%, other large towns 38%, small towns 40%, and rural 50%. This was used as evidence for regional differences in levels of church attendance. Church attendance in Scotland and Wales was higher than in England.

Attendance by denomination was assessed from a previous survey for the *Daily Telegraph* and did not ask for the frequency of church attendance. It is therefore not quite so useful. It found that the imbalance between women and men attending was biggest in the Roman Catholic church. The Roman Catholics had the largest proportion of membership aged under 25, the Free Churches the smallest.

Both the Roman Catholics and the Free Churches drew more support "from the lower-income groups, while the Church of England finds more middle-class and larger-income support"<sup>8</sup>. This was seen as meaning that the Church of England was less centred on one social class,

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<sup>8</sup> *British Weekly* 20<sup>th</sup> January 1949 "Searchlight on the 'Faithful Fifth' "

partly because it had a much larger group of occasional attenders, in contemporary jargon, the fringe.

Amongst the most committed people surveyed, about 400 people, few travelled long distances to church. 48% travelled less than  $\frac{1}{2}$  mile, a further 36% less than 1 mile, making a total of 84%. Only about 6 people travelled more than 2 miles, and three-quarters walked to church. Surprisingly, given the possible variety of denominations and distribution of various churches, the distance travelled was almost the only characteristic where Free Church and Church of England attenders were the same. Mass-Observation had earlier found similar results in surveys on the choice of public houses: people did not necessarily go to the nearest pub, but they rarely went more than  $\frac{1}{2}$  mile.

Finally, Free Church attenders were far more likely than Anglican ones to attend church twice on a Sunday (55% against 14%). The denominational differences were far greater than those of age or gender. The Free Church congregations were more clearly defined, with a much more active membership than the Anglican congregations.

### 12.2.3 Which church do you choose?

In choosing a particular church most people gave more than one reason for doing so, as was often found in the questionnaire used in the present study.<sup>9</sup>

The most frequent reason given was habit, about 40% giving this reason. This was much more the case with the Free Church attenders than the Church of England attenders. In the Free Churches people were far more likely to have attended the same church all their lives (20% compared with 5%). A further 46% in the Free Churches had attended for more than 10 years, compared with 21% in the Anglican church.<sup>10</sup> (In the terms of the Church Growth Movement people who had attended the same church all their lives would be placed in the category of biological growth, rather than habit!)

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<sup>9</sup> See table 6.7a on reasons for "joining this church"

<sup>10</sup> *British Weekly* 27<sup>th</sup> January 1949 "The Church You Choose"

The next most common reason for attending, cited by about 25% of the people surveyed, was given as atmosphere. It seems to have been used “to imply a feeling of fellowship and friendliness.”

Further reasons given in declining order of frequency were:

“the church’s doctrine  
a liking for the service  
nearness of the church  
particular aspects of the service, such as singing, preaching, personality  
of the minister”<sup>11</sup>

There was no evidence that comfortable buildings were in themselves an advantage in attracting people to attend church, even though many ministers and laymen (sic) wanted improved premises. What did seem to matter was creating a welcoming atmosphere, and the right size of building was important.<sup>12</sup>

When non-churchgoers were asked why they did not attend church they overwhelmingly referred to insincerity in the clergy and a lack of welcome by congregations; only one in forty referred to uncomfortable buildings.<sup>13</sup>

#### 12.2.4 The full churches

The final piece of work examined the most popular churches in some detail, useful since the parishes studied in Part II of this thesis included some of the best attended congregations in the diocese of Chelmsford.

Only a few churches were studied (the number is not given), Anglican and Free Churches in the London area. The claim made in the research was simply “that all the churches specially

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<sup>11</sup> As given in the Findings in Brief on 27<sup>th</sup> January 1947

<sup>12</sup> Cf. the central thesis of Gill, *The Myth of the Empty Church*

<sup>13</sup> This is the final comment of the next article: *British Weekly* 3<sup>rd</sup> February 1949 “Churches Full ”

studied have in fact certain common factors.”<sup>14</sup> Like Part II of the present study this part was akin to a qualitative interview of churches, not just individuals.

Their first finding was that the popular churches were not drawing people away from other local churches, but were often attracting people from some distance. Given the relatively low level of personal car ownership in 1949, the ability to travel depended on the public transport network in a major city, and it is not clear that this pattern would have been repeated except in the largest cities. Unlike the case in the general survey (see section 12.2.2), journeys of half an hour to popular churches were not uncommon. (It would seem that this was a separate survey to the one discussed above.)

The evidence that these churches were not growing by transfer growth (not a term in use at that time) depended on the assurances of ministers. “... only a small proportion of these [people from other parishes or denominations] have been practising members of other churches and few of the remainder have looked as if they were likely to be.” More recent studies of possible transfer growth are described below in section 12.3.

Door-to-door enquiries suggested that popular churches were better known in their neighbourhood than the less popular churches. No antagonism was expressed by non-churchgoers.

Unlike the less popular churches, habit was hardly given as a reason for attending. Apart from that, the reasons given do then start in a similar fashion to the more general list given in section 12.2.3. The most important factor was personal contact with existing attenders. Once people had gone to the church in the first place it was the friendly and welcoming atmosphere which was important. “The ‘liveliness’ of the congregation and church is mentioned over and over again by members and non-members alike.”

The atmosphere was set largely by the congregation; the minister’s sincerity in spiritual matters and organisational skills seemed to be his particular contributions. In particular, it

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<sup>14</sup> *ibid.*

seemed important for the minister to involve as many people as possible in active service in and through the church.

#### 12.2.5 The Mass-Observation conclusions

The final article<sup>15</sup> brought together the main findings from the series and are given here for convenient reference.

They were especially encouraged by two findings:

1. There was little anti-religious feeling; most people had a Bible in the house. The difficulty was apathy, rather than outright opposition.
2. Churchgoers came from all sections of society, unlike most other minority groups.

However, they also observed some problems in the churches:

1. There was little sign of a compelling life in the church; churchgoers had similar attitudes to rest of population. Deep sincerity of belief was not shown "to any great extent".
2. In most cases there was a lack of connection between "the leaders and the led", which they also observed in other spheres of contemporary life.
3. It was important to state facts openly. This view was amplified by a statement about the lack of evidence that watered down Christianity produced a live church.

The features they wished to encourage in church life were:

1. Creating the right atmosphere of welcome, sincerity and equality.
2. "Greater emphasis on the understanding of the common man's problems and on the working of the common man's mind." This was seen to include realism about doubts as well as belief.
3. "Too much emphasis cannot be placed on the value of youth to the church." This point arose from the active and well received youth groups in popular churches and from the links that nearly all adult attenders had with churches in their own childhood.

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<sup>15</sup> *British Weekly* 10<sup>th</sup> February 1949 "No blood. No toil, No tears "

### 12.3 Comparisons with more recent studies

Many of the findings in the 1949 study can be compared with more recent work. The methods and samples are not necessarily exactly the same, but a number of useful comparisons are possible. In itself this indicates the value of the 1949 study, and if it became possible at a later stage to recover the technical data underlying the newspaper articles it would be even more useful for longitudinal comparisons.

The following sections match those in 12.2.

#### 12.3.1 Reasons for church attendance

Denominational fluidity is often thought to be increasing<sup>16</sup>; but it is noticeable that half of one of the 1949 samples had changed denomination from that of their upbringing, and it was especially associated with a conversion experience of some kind. This can be compared with Finney's work which found 20% of his sample changed denomination in a period of intense spiritual change.<sup>17</sup> Finney's sample concentrated on those who had made a public profession of faith within the previous 12 months<sup>18</sup>, and so was not chosen on the same basis as the Mass-Observation sample, but the similarity of finding is striking.

The Wakefield survey only asked if the previous church attended had been of a different denomination: in this case for those now attending Anglican churches 22% had been in a non-Anglican church immediately before joining their present church, but this was skewed upwards by the number of church plants surveyed. It seems that there is more movement between Free Church denominations, Mass-Observation mention it, but the variation over time does not necessarily show a greater denominational fluidity than previously.

Though not described in these terms, Gill hints at this in his discussion of changes in church attendance in the nineteenth century: "over all, the Free Churches contained a variety of

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<sup>16</sup> for example, *in passim*, Brierley *'Christian' England*, p.33: "In a day when many people move from one congregation to another to suit their tastes..."

<sup>17</sup> Finney *op. cit.*, p.80

<sup>18</sup> *ibid.*, p. vii



patterns in tension. Older groups tended to decline, while new groups thrived.”<sup>19</sup> In describing church attendance in Birmingham he shows variations in attendance between denominations over time, and concludes “all in all this suggests considerable volatility”<sup>20</sup>.

It would seem, then, that there is a significant level of denominational fluidity, a situation that has been in existence for at least a hundred years. Studies of earlier periods may indicate its prevalence further back.

In this survey 96% of the most committed adults had attended some church activity as children. This was 48 people out of 50. In Finney’s research 90% had had some contact with the church during childhood, mostly of a prolonged nature. As in the 1949 study, family attitude towards Christianity was generally positive.<sup>21</sup> The proportion of people with childhood contact with the church has not dropped very far, demonstrating the validity of the stress on work with young people if churches are to have adult members in the future.

In joining a church personal contact was found to be important. As noted in chapter 6 this was found to be the case in more recent research: in Finney’s work the most important factor was overwhelmingly a personal contact, whether through a spouse, other family members or a friend.<sup>22</sup> Nearly half mentioned this contact as the main factor in becoming a Christian or more committed Christian. This finding has remained valid half a century on.

Nor is this just a British phenomenon: a recent survey by interview of 1600 Christians in Germany, Austria and Switzerland asked them to state the factors which had led them to making a Christian commitment and joining a church. On average they gave 1½ reasons, and 76% said it was through a friend or relation. This answer was given more than three times as often as any other.<sup>23</sup>

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<sup>19</sup> Gill, *op. cit.*, p.129

<sup>20</sup> *ibid.*, p.163

<sup>21</sup> Finney, *op. cit.*, p.12

<sup>22</sup> *ibid.*, p.36

<sup>23</sup> C. Schwarz “Need Orientated Evangelism” *Church Growth Digest* 17.4, 1996, p.10. Table 1.

It should be noted that these surveys were investigating initial Christian commitment, and not attendance at a particular church. As will be highlighted in the qualitative interviews discussed in the next chapter, relationships are important in **both** decisions.

It is not possible to directly compare the answer 'habit' as a reason for attending church in the more recent studies. However, the factors of childhood contact and length of attendance at a given church seem to still be valid. It is perhaps less acceptable to describe churchgoers in terms of habit and duty, but it would seem to still play an important part in maintaining attendance.

### 12.3.2 Who was going to church?

MARC Europe censuses in 1979 and 1989 found 11% and 9½% respectively of adults in England in church on a given Sunday<sup>24</sup>, while the BSA<sup>25</sup> data found weekly church attendance of 12.4% in 1983/4 and 11.3% in 1994. The latter was a sample of the general population, which tends to produce slightly higher claimed rates of church attendance. Both measures were down on the assumed 15-20% of 1949.

It was found in 1949 that the age distribution was reasonably in line with that of the general population. By 1989 this was no longer the case, with churchgoers over-represented in the under 15's and over 65's, and under-represented in the 15-44 age groups.<sup>26</sup>

Gender differences remained the same overall, with a ratio of 58 women to 42 men. However, the situation within denominations had changed dramatically. Where in 1949 the Roman Catholics had had the greatest imbalance between men and women, by 1989 they had the most even ratio of 55 women to 45 men, and the Anglican church had the greatest imbalance with 61 women to 39 men. This was a considerable drop from 1979 when the ratio was 55 women to 45 men in Anglican churches.<sup>27</sup>

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<sup>24</sup> Brierley *'Christian' England*, p.30

<sup>25</sup> British Social Attitudes data supplied by Prof. Gill

<sup>26</sup> *op. cit.*, p.81

<sup>27</sup> *ibid.*, p.85

A further change from 1949 was in the numbers of those attending church twice on a Sunday: in the case of the Free Churches it had gone from 55% to 28%, especially because of a large drop in 'twicing' by Methodists and URC members. In the case of the Anglicans the drop was from 14% to 10%.<sup>28</sup>

### 12.3.3 Reasons for attending a particular church

Some comparisons in reasons for choosing a particular church can be made with the present thesis.

It is not known in the Wakefield study (1993) how many people had belonged to the same church all their lives, but it is possible to compare the proportions who had belonged for 10 or more years. In 1949 26% had attended the same Anglican church for 10 or more years, in the present study it was 34%.<sup>29</sup> This latter figure is somewhat depressed by the disproportionate number of church plants in the survey, reaching 40%+ for many of the longer established congregations. Though not as high as the Free Church figure in the 1949 report (which was 66%), it is considerably higher than the Anglican figure for 1949. Could the Second World War have meant more movement amongst Anglican attenders, who were on average younger than the Free Church attenders?

In the present survey the three most common reasons given for choosing a particular church were the nearness of the church, the style of worship and friends. Although proximity of the church had declined as a reason over a 20 year period it would seem to have been more important than it was in the 1949 research.

As was shown in table 6.19 there was a tendency for the worship and friendship to become more important, while nearness of the church had become less important, though still more significant than many other factors.

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<sup>28</sup> *ibid.*, p.47

<sup>29</sup> Table 6.6

The comments on the relative unimportance of the buildings seems to be borne out by recent research from the German Institute for Church Development.<sup>30</sup> An international study of 1,000 churches found church growth associated with 8 quality characteristics, including an inspiring worship service, loving relationships and opportunities for lay people to use their gifts. The type of building did not seem important.

#### 12.3.4 Popular churches

The assertion that the popular churches in 1949 were growing through restoration and conversion growth (to use the Church Growth Movement terms) has to be treated with some caution. It is dependent on the knowledge of ministers on the past spiritual lives of those attending, and on their interpretation of those lives. The present piece of research has shown frequently that that interpretation can be very different from that of the individuals concerned.<sup>31</sup>

Similarly, the assertion that popular churches have not adversely affected other local churches does not seem to have been tested by looking at attendance statistics, but stated on the basis of journey times. Counter-evidence to this proposition has been given by Gill in a detailed study of church attendance in York, where a few popular churches do seem to have depleted other congregations. "It is difficult to escape the conclusion that individual congregations did tend to prosper at the expense of their neighbours."<sup>32</sup>

The importance of personal contact in developing popular churches continues. A recent empirical study by John Clarke has shown that 'Web' churches, depending on personal networks are growing far more quickly than 'Osmosis' churches which concentrate on a geographical area.<sup>33</sup> In addition, apart from Roman Catholic churches which have a very

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<sup>30</sup> Schwarz *Natural Church Development* Part 1

<sup>31</sup> Letters from ministers describing the types of growth in their congregation tend to produce a higher number of conversions and restorations than the self-descriptions of the individuals concerned. ?further ref. to find!?

<sup>32</sup> Gill, *op. cit.*, chapter 9, p.230

<sup>33</sup> Clarke *Evangelism that really works*, p.20 and p.127, Table 9

different pattern of attendance to Protestant churches in England, nearly all the large congregations in England are 'Web' churches.

## 12.4 Summary

Many of the results of the Mass-Observation study of 1949 are confirmed by later studies. The following seem to be the key points, also noting results which have changed:

- The reasons given for attending church and for the popularity of certain churches are largely the same in the earlier research and in that of the 1990's
- The importance of atmosphere and use of laity has been demonstrated repeatedly
- Adult churchgoers nearly always had a positive childhood experience of church
- Denominational fluidity has long been a feature of English church life
- Personal contact is important to most people in attending a church, especially in churches drawing from a wider area
- Gender ratios in denominations seem to have altered
- Attending church twice on a Sunday has dropped dramatically, especially in Free Churches

The significance of agreements in the findings lies in the fact that these pieces of research have been done independently. The Mass-Observation survey was itself a pioneering study, and the more recent work of Finney, Clarke and the earlier parts of the present thesis were undertaken with no previous knowledge of the 1949 report.

There are some gaps in the 1949 study, including the patchy use of statistics. The reliance on ministerial perceptions is another weakness, though one shared by many pieces of research, and it is to be commended for seeking to find the views of lay members of churches.

The next chapter deals with the results of interviews conducted during the present research, examining in more detail reasons individuals give for joining a particular church.

## Chapter Thirteen

### Qualitative Interviews

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In order to round out the statistical picture developed in part II, it was decided to hold a series of qualitative interviews with people currently attending church. It was felt important since the motivation for attending church was thought to be more complex than can be easily described on a questionnaire, especially the way that various factors interact.

It is not necessarily the case that individuals can always describe their own motivations with complete accuracy, but as with earlier researchers we take seriously their own accounts:

*"since actors have privileged access to their intentions and beliefs, the presumption must be that their characterisation of their actions and their accounts of why they are performing them are the correct ones."*<sup>1</sup>

As the following discussion shows, the interviewees did reveal something of the reality behind the statistics and also of the way in which different factors combined for different people. In addition, certain features, such as denominational loyalty and graduate status, were highlighted in a way that the original questionnaire had not brought out. The final section of the chapter pulls together the conclusions drawn from the interviews.

### 13.1 Selection of Interviewees

With the agreement of the supervisor, all interviewees were selected from the author's own congregation of Christ Church, Billericay. This made the practical arrangements easier and had the added benefit of pastoral contact, helping to justify the time spent on the project.

A total of 12 interviews was decided upon as giving enough breadth across the different factors, while still being a manageable number. An extra interview took place because one tape-recording was incomplete; the extra interview is not specifically referred to.

The variables considered were gender, age, and reason for leaving a previous church, if any.

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<sup>1</sup> Wallis and Bruce, "Accounting for Action: Defending the Common Sense Heresy", cited in Hornsby-Smith *Roman Catholic Beliefs in England*, p.5

**Gender** was potentially important in considering reasons for joining a church on practical grounds as well as any general female/male differences: less easy access to personal transport could be a factor for women, especially older women.

**Age** may indicate changes over time, as well as different attitudes at different ages. Clearly, to fully research this would require longitudinal studies over a considerable period of time.

The **reason for leaving a previous church** or being a new attender could make a difference in the reasons for joining another church. This was the most important variable of the three.

Taking account of all the possible combinations would have meant 30 interviews, so the number was reduced to 12 by taking account of the profile of Christ Church in the 3 variables as shown in the Wakefield survey of 1993.<sup>2</sup>

This meant looking for 5 males and 7 females, with 2 people in the 16-30 age group, 4 in the 31-45 age group, 3 in the 46-60 age group, 2 in the 61-75 age group, and 1 person in the 75+ age group. The following table sets out the way in which the interviewees were distributed between the three variables. Figures in brackets are sub-totals.

Table 13.1 Selection of interviewees

Male interviewees (total 5)

	16-30 (1)	31-45 (2)	46-60 (1)	61-75 (1)	75+ (0)
<b>new attender (2)</b>	✓	✓			
<b>moved house (2)</b>		✓		✓	
<b>unhappy (1)</b>			✓		

Female interviewees (total 7)

	16-30 (1)	31-45 (2)	46-60 (2)	61-75 (1)	75+ (1)
<b>new attender (3)</b>		✓	✓	✓	
<b>moved house (3)</b>	✓		✓		✓
<b>unhappy (1)</b>		✓			

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<sup>2</sup> See tables 7.4 and 7.9



It was then relatively straightforward to search the data base for those people who fitted the categories. In one case a person who had joined the church since the survey of 1993 was selected. In one other case the initial person selected declined to be interviewed; the otherwise positive response meant that the interviews took place in a relaxed setting.

### 13.2 Interview Method

All interviews bar one were held in the home of the interviewee to put them at ease. All the interviewees knew the interviewer as their vicar, but it was made clear by letter and verbally that he was acting as a researcher during the interview. The original questionnaire<sup>3</sup> was given to each person in advance in order to check that they fitted the profile sought. This also assisted in asking further questions verbally.

The interviews varied in duration from 20 minutes to an hour, mostly lasting about 40 minutes. They were recorded and transcribed<sup>4</sup> shortly after each interview. The transcription was checked against the recording, and then given to the interviewee as a further check. From the 12 transcripts only one minor alteration (the gender of a personal pronoun) was made by the interviewees, suggesting a high level of accuracy in the recording and transcribing process.

The following outline sequence of questions was used in each case, though the aim was to encourage a flowing discussion. The list of questions was modified as appropriate to the circumstances of the person concerned:

1. How long have you been attending Christ Church?
2. Did you attend another church before Christ Church?
  - If yes, how long ago was that?
  - What denomination was it? Importance attached to denomination
  - Why did you leave the previous church?
  - Was there a gap? How long?

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<sup>3</sup> Appendix A

<sup>4</sup> The help of Angela Wood in doing all the transcriptions is gratefully acknowledged.

3. Why did you join a church? What were your priorities?
4. What caused you to join Christ Church, rather than another church?
5. What is the attitude of your partner?
6. What factors do you think important in joining, leaving or staying for other people?

### 13.3 Analysis of Interviews

#### 13.3.1 Reasons for joining Christ Church

##### Nearest church

Half those interviewed indicated on their questionnaires that they had joined Christ Church because it was their nearest church, or at least their nearest Anglican church. This turns out to be exactly the proportion giving that response in the 1993 survey at Christ Church<sup>5</sup>; this was the highest proportion in any of the congregations surveyed, so it enables a closer examination of what the response 'nearest' might mean.

The six indicating 'nearest' were 3 men and 3 women, across the age ranges. In 5 cases they were people transferring from another church following a house move, and they shared a sense of the importance of worshipping locally.

Jane, in her late 20's, articulates that well. In response to the question, "*What brought you to Christ Church?*", she replied, "The main reason was really it's the local church, the closest."<sup>6</sup> For her it was being in "walking distance and part of the local community" that made worshipping locally important.

Geoff, in his 60's, said, "I had also had a feeling that we should be worshipping at a church where we living". He and his family had joined Christ Church in 1972 and the convenience of worshipping locally with a young family was important. Considering a possible house move in the near future he commented, "We are not so constrained by distance now, I feel. ... The nearness to a particular church is not so important."

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<sup>5</sup> See table 7.7

In his case, the circumstances which had led to nearness being important had gone, and he would take more account of the spirituality and liveliness of the congregations in a new area. There was an interesting echo of the Mass Observation finding that popular churches were spoken of as “lively” by attenders and non-attenders.<sup>7</sup>

Cathy, now in her late 40’s, had also joined Christ Church when her children were young, following a house move and had looked for the nearest church, partly because they had no car. Although being the nearest was important, other aspects such as the welcome given, contact between vicars and the approach to Anglican liturgy were also important. “It was the atmosphere which was nice and quite a relaxed form of service”. A further factor was the modern feel of the building, about seven years old at that time. “I liked the plain feel about it and not too many ornate things”. Although Cathy’s only reason on the questionnaire for joining *Christ Church* was ‘nearest church’ the interview revealed a complex set of reasons, involving people, worship and even the physical setting.

Mollie V. joined Christ Church ten years ago after attending Anglican churches most of her life. Having reached retirement, she moved house to be near family members. They attended Christ Church and it was natural for Mollie to join them too. Even in this case, though, she was significantly helped by the welcome she received: “I found that almost as soon as I got here people were very friendly.”

Two of the men indicating ‘nearest’ gave a second reason: Brian, who had not attended another church, also indicated ‘baptism of child’ as an important factor.

Now in his 30’s, Brian had had very little previous contact in his life with the church, and went to his nearest church to have his first child baptized. The initial reason was that “It was the family thing to do.” Through the preparation that was given he made a Christian commitment as the explanations of the Christian faith “seemed to slip into place”. The sense of revelation was very important in his case, and is discussed below in the section ‘Converted’.

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<sup>6</sup> The quotations in this chapter are taken directly from the transcripts of the interviews.

<sup>7</sup> See chapter 12.2.4

For Mark, now in his 30's, the first local contact also came via a request to the vicar to have his child christened. He had previously attended an Anglican church with his wife in another town, and before that had been brought up in the Roman Catholic church. For him being "comfortable" in the worship was important. This was fleshed out as "openness" and "In the worship there were different styles, and there was quite a fair amount of question and democracy and diversity of opinion." The relative freedom of the Church of England compared to the Roman Catholic church was clearly important to Mark, and it was this which made him refer to style of worship, rather than any issue of churchmanship.

A further 2 people of the 12 interviewees worshipped at Christ Church because they had come with parents, attending their nearest church. In all, then, for 8 of the 12 attending the nearest church was important. This is a reflection of the ethos of the church which largely sees itself as a local parish church, open to a wide range of worship styles. It is also demonstrated by the Electoral Roll figures on which over 96% live within the parish.<sup>8</sup>

Five of the six people who had indicated 'nearest' as the reason for choosing Christ Church had joined from a previous church commitment which they wished to continue in a new place. However, the interviews revealed that further factors were important for most of them in reinforcing that decision even at an early stage. Here it was the sense of welcome and the style or ethos of the worship which were important in choosing one church over another.

It is a pattern observed by ministers in any area with more than one church: a newcomer to the area may visit the nearest church to try it out, but will frequently visit others before settling in one. It is a good example of the need for interpretation of statistical surveys by seeking to understand better the dynamics for an individual making decisions.

### Worship

Two men indicated worship style on their questionnaire as a reason for joining Christ Church. Mark also put 'nearest' as discussed above; Tim also included the provision for children, the only one of the 12 to do so.

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<sup>8</sup> 1996 Electoral Roll

Tim had moved house, area of the country and church on eight or nine occasions. He had mostly attended Anglican churches with an evangelical flavour: reviewing all his changes of church he commented, “there was a comfortable nest with the Anglican service, whether it was the old form or a modern form. ... teaching was important.”

In referring to style of worship it was not about music for him, but the positive use of liturgy. Attending a non-Anglican church which was their nearest church had left him and his wife dissatisfied: “we went to this local church where it seemed to us because there was no liturgy it was possible for less than perfect people to go off on a tangent.”

Along with the lack of facilities for their junior school children, this led them to join Christ Church. It was not their nearest Anglican church, but the nearest in which “we recognised the brand of Anglicanism we were happy with [and] there was some youth work”.

Although no-one else put style of worship on their questionnaire it was mentioned in the interviews by 4 of the other 5 people who had moved church. For Geoff the convenience of the local church was key, but the very next comment was: “I suppose the style of worship suited us alright”. He now places a higher value on the worship style, partly because it is easier to travel to church, and partly because he is more aware of his own spiritual preferences: “I do tend to enjoy now the charismatic style of worship” and “Holy Communion is important to me”.

Jane found worship style very important, and had attended Baptist and house church congregations as well as Anglican. She looked round various churches in another town: “I went to a few churches in W., not very challenging.... I still wasn’t very satisfied. They are not very *lively*. (My emphasis) Then I went to a Baptist in Shotgate, almost the next nearest church and went there regularly.”

Although she said denomination had no importance for her in the choice of church she also said, “It was just where I felt comfortable. I suppose at the back of your mind there is always your upbringing. When I became a Christian I went to an Anglican church and therefore the

liturgy was very familiar and the way a service was run. (Pause) I don't think that would particularly influence me. I went to the Baptist church but didn't really feel at home there."

The familiarity of the liturgy and the approach to the liturgy in fact was important to Jane. Within that mix, it is perhaps noteworthy that her husband is a Roman Catholic, who happily has dual membership in his local Catholic and Anglican churches. Coming to an Anglican church, with perhaps a more structured approach to liturgy than Jane would want has proved an acceptable middle ground.

The interviews, then, emphasized the important role worship style played for those who were transferring church. Of the seven who had transferred, only one did not refer directly to worship, and the comments made by most people were quite extended.

In the interviews with those joining for the first time or after a long break the style of worship was not mentioned. It would seem that other factors are more directly important, though it may be that worship style plays an indirect part in the process.

#### Friends/family

Two people at opposite ends of the age spectrum had been brought to the church by their parents, Marcus now in his late teens, and Mollie R. in her early 70's. In both cases, as was found in the Mass Observation survey, they had had to come to a point where the commitment was personally owned. In Marcus' case he described a Christian camp at the age of 12, where "it all suddenly began to make sense. ... I myself made a conscious decision as opposed to my parents just saying you go along to church".

In Mollie R's case the commitment took much longer and came after a 20 year absence from church attendance. She saw herself as raised as a Christian, though faith issues were not talked about in the home. The influence of her parents was indirect but crucial.

Joy joined Christ Church after becoming unhappy with the leadership at a house church, and indicated on her questionnaire that friends were the reason for choosing Christ Church. "[I]

decided to give Christ Church a try ... because there were people there I knew.” The advantage for Joy, the only person in her household coming to Christ Church at that time, was that “it gave me a sense of security by trying it out with somebody else.”

Again the interview revealed that friendships were not the only reason for choosing this particular church: the bad experience of leadership in the previous church meant that the attitude of the leaders was crucial: “I wasn’t so concerned with the style of the church rather than the people that were there leading the church.”

As with Tim who joined Christ Church after an unsatisfactory experience of another church, not surprisingly, the factors that led to dissatisfaction were uppermost in their minds when looking for a new congregation to join.

No one else mentioned family or friends on the questionnaire but every single person interviewed spoke of the importance of making relationships with people in the congregation, and indeed mentioned its importance with other experiences of joining churches. This has already been mentioned in the discussion of those who said they had joined their nearest church, and it was also true of those who put down other reasons.

It also means that forming good relationships was seen as important both by those who were transferring church and by those who were new to church attendance. An example from each category will illustrate this fact.

Sue had not attended a Christian church until a friend persuaded her to go on an Alpha course, which she was told would help her understand the Christian faith. She said, “The people helped an awful lot” and “I joined Christ Church because I liked the people.”

Cathy made much of the nearness of Christ Church and the style of worship, yet even so she referred to the welcome and perceived friendliness of the congregation as many times as she mentioned the worship: “people were friendly” and “friendly atmosphere” were typical phrases used by Cathy in describing her choice of church.

The findings of the Mass Observation survey and of Finney and others mentioned in the previous chapter (section 12.3.1 and the summary in 12.4) are extended in these interviews: alongside issues of belief and worship, it is hard to overstate the importance of personal contact in joining a church, and it applies both to those transferring and to those who are new to church attendance.

### Converted

One person indicated her reason for joining Christ Church as 'converted here'. This was Sue who had been attending an Alpha course at the church. She spoke about the importance of having her questions answered, and seeing how the answers fitted together:

*"It was the questions I enjoyed, and there were a lot of questions I didn't understand about Jesus. The three-in-one took me many weeks to come to term with, the Father, the Son and the Holy Spirit, the Holy Trinity. I could not get that at all; and basically answering all my questions, which I had loads of. Because to me, the bible contradicted itself, there were things I never understood. I used to read and think 'I've got them on this one', and take this in next time. But then it was all explained to me, and it all started to fall into place."*

This is quoted at length because it shows the way in which the intellectual questions had to be dealt with. In her case, though there was a sense of growing belonging, the growth of belief had to go alongside that. It is not that Sue is an academic, but as an intelligent woman she needed to understand what she was being asked to believe and to belong to.

Though others did not put 'converted here' on their forms the other people did refer to moments in their lives which were crucial in developing their faith and strengthening or starting their commitment to the church.<sup>9</sup> In 2 cases this had taken place through Christ Church connections in some way.

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<sup>9</sup> Cathy, interviewed first, did not talk about this aspect because she was not asked about it. This was seen to be a useful part of the conversations and introduced in the other cases, by asking interviewees for a more complete history of the faith journey.



Brian had a very strong sense of revelation in his story: in describing the visit of a small team from the church come to share their faith he said, "Everything that was being said seemed to me so obvious and so basic."

There was a great excitement about the process for him:

*"I was nine foot tall, I was floating, it's hard to describe. I was alive, I really was. It was as if the answer to all the questions I ever had were there in front of me. I had the solution and that to me was a revelation. That was as big a buzz as I got probably when Emma was born".*

Viv had attended a mission held by all the churches of Billericay, at the invitation of someone in the Christ Church congregation. She made a Christian commitment in the context of a big tent meeting, but immediately attended church. The emotions for Viv were rather different from those for Brian. Describing this episode even after 7 years made Viv cry: "[God] was there for me. I don't know why I cried, perhaps all the sadness coming out. God is somebody who cares."

Then the sense of newness was very real: *"It was like something you weren't sure of being (pause) you were trying to find it, you thought it possibly was there, but you were never sure. Suddenly it was all there. You can see it all and everything is different."*

Joining a church was not so easy: "I felt like a fish out of water." And, *"I was totally unfamiliar with whatever went on, and I didn't know anybody, even if I went I would feel lost. Where to sit even."*

Brian and Viv did have intellectual questions to ask later, but they experienced a sense of something transcendent which was strongly associated with the local church. Out of that came a commitment to other people and a continuing growth in understanding.

In both cases the time over which this commitment took place, both as a Christian and to church attendance, was very short, a matter of weeks. The work of Finney showed that this was true only in a minority of cases, but nonetheless it does occur. He found that 31% of his

sample could give a date for their Christian commitment, and of those who described it as a gradual process 21% said it was less than a year.<sup>10</sup>

There were similar remarks made by two other interviewees about their experience of coming to faith, an event taking place prior to joining Christ Church. Both events had been in their teenage years and they had found faith over a relatively short period of time. Thus 4, or possibly 5, of the 12 interviewees had found faith over a short period of time, measured in weeks rather than years, while 7 did describe it as a longer process.

In the light of the emphasis now rightly being placed on process in evangelism it is also worth noting Finney's comment on this point: "This does not mean that the possibility of "sudden" conversions should be neglected: the figures show that a sizeable minority even of those from traditional churches have this kind of experience."<sup>11</sup>

### 13.3.2 Reasons for joining a church

The reasons people had joined a church at all were not explored in the same depth as those described above, but some useful points were made. The answers fall into three reasonably distinct categories:

1. those who had joined a church for the first time as an adult (it happens that for all the interviewees in this category Christ Church was that church)
2. those who attended church or Sunday school as children without their parents going to church
3. those who were taken to church or Sunday school as children by church attending parents.

These categories were not in mind in this form when selecting the interviewees, though there is some relationship to the reasons for leaving a previous church. These categories arose from the interviews. They are not totally separate categories in practice, but serve to reveal some patterns.

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<sup>10</sup> Finney, *op. cit.*, p. 24, Fig. 13

<sup>11</sup> *ibid.*, p.25

The stories told by Sue, Viv and Brian are typical in the way that they spoke of explanations “making sense” or “falling into place”. They were the three people interviewed who had joined Christ Church as adults, without a transfer of church being involved. The sense of revelation was very real to them. Their reasons for joining are essentially those discussed above in the section ‘Converted’.

As was found in the Mass Observation survey and in Finney’s research, the habit of churchgoing, especially as a childhood pattern for at least some period, is there for most of those interviewed, nine of the 12 having had some contact with church. At least five of the nine had attended church or Sunday school without parents going to church, both men and women, and across the full age range.

Brian had only attended Sunday school briefly and his commitment came much later as an adult; the other people who had attended without their parents going to church had made their commitment at an early stage, and it had grown from there. For example, Jane became a Christian after conversations with a Christian friend, and reading about the Christian faith: “everything seemed to make more sense”, and it was then she began to attend church.

For Geoff, now in his mid 60’s, joining a church at about the age of 40 was “really a search for life , the universe and everything.” There were further important stages for him, especially making a more personal Christian commitment about 13 years ago: “it had never been fully explained to me what being a Christian meant in the terms I understand it now.” In his case, believing or a greater depth of belief, came after a considerable period of belonging. In the cases of those who had gone with parents it was not enough to simply maintain the habit of church attendance. It was necessary for them to make the beliefs and spirituality their own. Marcus, having made his own commitment at 12, now looked back at that and said, “this was me saying I want to go because I believe it is the right thing.”

Mark, raised as a Roman Catholic, had had to come to his own commitment by changing denominations: “I think I have always been a Christian but I am born again in a difference in doctrine. I don't know where it will lead....”

Mollie R's experience of church as a child made her feel she was a Christian but not seeing the point of the confirmation she was asked to make. That led to a period of about 20 years in which she did not attend church. It was a sense of dissatisfaction at the age of 37, after the birth of her son, "when I began to have a deeper think about what I believed" she said.

The story of King David fascinated her: "I thought that this is really true. There is no whitewash on this king yet they still admired him. I took to that, and I thought at that time I wish there was some sort of adult bible study where I could ask questions."

All those interviewed were able to identify the factors which they saw as leading to them joining a church. It is noteworthy that habit played little part in their answers but belief was very prominent. This does seem to be a different emphasis from the results of the Mass Observation survey. In that survey habit was seen as the biggest reason for people attending, along with personal belief and the influence of parents.

In that survey only 2 out of 50 interviewed in depth had not had contact with the church in early life. In this survey it was 2 out of 12, and of the others interviewed 2 had not attended church until teenagers. These figures can not be statistically significant, but could indicate that a growing number of people are attending church for the first time in teenage or adult life. Further research on a longitudinal basis would be useful in looking for changing patterns of joining.

### 13.3.3 Factors in joining churches prior to Christ Church

Seven of the interviewees had belonged to another church prior to Christ Church, and one was currently away at university and had looked to join a church there. Two had belonged to just one other church, and Cathy (the first interviewee) was not asked about previous changes. Overall this meant that five people described earlier transfers of church.

Of this group of 5, all but one had gone away from home to university and this was a formative factor in looking for a church, and the amount of movement. Only one other

person, the oldest in the group of 12, had attended even as few as 3 churches on a regular basis. The graduates had belonged on average to 6 churches, (still over 4 if Tim was excluded), the non-graduates to 1.5 churches.

Between the five describing a previous transfer of church, there were 17 transfers, though 9 were by Tim who had moved house frequently. Only one of the 17 transfers described was because of dissatisfaction with their church; they nearly always had attended their local church.

This part of the interview reinforced the sense of people wanting to join their local, Anglican church wherever possible. Tim repeatedly used the word Anglican, though with his wife he had attended a Methodist church when that had been much closer to them.

Marcus, away at university, tried a Baptist church, but then went to “St. John’s which was a Church of England church, and it was probably the nearest thing that I had found to Christ Church in my area of H.” The sense of looking for what was familiar came out in the conversation with Tim, who had repeatedly looked for evangelical Anglican churches, with a teaching ministry and an acceptance of liturgy.

What hadn’t been so clear in the discussion of reasons for joining Christ Church was the way in which people were ready to try different churches in an area before settling on one. This was particularly true in the university context but seemed to continue into later choices about church. It was especially noticeable that Jane and Tim referred back to their university experience of church in assessing where to attend; they were the people with the highest number of churches attended regularly.

There were no university graduates in the group with no previous church transfers; the interviews showed a clear distinction in the pattern of church joining and moving between the graduates and non-graduates. The distinction of graduates and non-graduates was not designed into the selection of interviewees, and there are non-graduates in the congregation with a greater amount of church transfer than those interviewed.

The key point would seem to be about mobility, not education. It appears to be another area for possible further research, especially since it had not been one of the expected findings. Furthermore, could the availability of undergraduates to university-based researchers give rise to an over-emphasis on certain issues, such as denominational fluidity?

#### 13.3.4 Reasons for leaving and denominational fluidity

One of the selection criteria for interviewees was their reason for leaving a previous church. The differences this made to reasons for joining Christ Church are discussed above in section 13.3.1.

Of the 12 interviewees, 5 had not attended another church immediately prior to church, 4 had moved house and from an Anglican church, 1 had moved house and changed denomination, and 2 had been dissatisfied with their previous church and changed denomination without moving house, as tabulated in table 13.2.

Table 13 2 Types of transfer growth among the interviewees

	same denomination	changed denomination	totals
moved house	4	1	5
did not move house	0	2	2
totals	4	3	7

Put another way, of the seven who had moved church at some time, 3 had always attended an Anglican church, 2 had had their initial experience of church in another denomination, one Roman Catholic and one Free Evangelical, and 2 had mainly attended Anglican churches. Overall, the interviewees had had the vast majority of their church experience in Anglican churches.

Changing church and denomination was not an easy thing to do: as Joy put it, “[I didn’t] know anything about the Anglican Church or what you are supposed to do at the right time.” It was not just the difference in style of worship that was difficult, it was also the “wrench leaving people from my other church, I had been there a long time.”

Though Jane felt denomination was not crucial, she had a similar difficulty going from an Anglican church to a Baptist congregation: "I went to the Baptist church but didn't really feel at home there." When asked why, she paused and then answered, "It was little things, like when we had communion we didn't share out of one big goblet. We all had the little serving cups, it was sad they did that. I didn't feel part of it."

She also commented on the way the expectations of what going to church meant were different between denominations: about the Baptist church she said, "Even now there is membership; it seemed like they were asking for commitment before, without...(left unstated) It just seemed nice that you could just walk into a church, without making an obvious commitment to everybody else." Referring to her observations of Roman Catholics, gained through her husband, she said, "there is always that element at the back of their minds that they have got to go to Mass, which is not necessarily a good thing but it's not a bad thing, I don't think."

Though Mark (not Jane's husband) had attended an Anglican church prior to Christ Church, he remained very aware of his Roman Catholic upbringing and concluded the interview wondering if he might return to the Roman Catholic church at some later date: "I am still exploring, and as the journey has gone on it has got more interesting. The hardest bit was starting that journey, not throwing the whole package out. I wonder, ironically, at the end if I will go back to Catholicism. But it's God's will wherever he takes me."

It seems then, staying in a familiar denomination is quite important, partly because of worship styles and partly because of membership expectations. These are additional factors to the commitment and friendship usually felt to those attending the same congregation.

There were no examples among the interviewees of someone moving to Christ Church out of dissatisfaction with another Anglican church, though that does happen both into and out of Christ Church. However, Mollie R. discussed the possibility:

*"I have had my times when I thought I can't stand anymore of this Christ Church. ... Then it always came back to either: I've got to be a permanent visitor in another parish - that would be OK but I wouldn't feel that I could put roots down - or I've*

*got to go to another denomination. It wouldn't worry me at all I would be quite happy with any, except possibly the Catholic church, but it would have given rise to speculation and gossip, and I'd have to give an explanation and I couldn't do that. So I stayed put, and kept me head down until it was all over."*

This highlights the pressure to remain loyal to the group that Mollie had belonged to for a considerable period of time, despite unease with the approach of a previous vicar. For other people the dissatisfaction does grow to the point where they do leave for another Anglican church.

Those who had moved house clearly found it less difficult to leave one church and join another, though of course the method for choosing interviewees excluded any people who had attended church elsewhere and felt unable to join a new church. For the people who had moved house, their reasons for leaving their church previous to Christ Church were not connected with church attendance. They were work-related (one person) or for family reasons: the family reasons included three people wanting a bigger house for growing families, and one person moving at retirement to be nearer family members.

As a committed church attender Cathy remarked that the type of local church would be a factor where there was a choice of location of a new home: "I think if you've got some church connections you'd want to be reasonably near one which was accessible to you in other ways as well." In her case, the move was to give space for a growing family and so there was some choice about the exact location.

The whole set of reasons people give for leaving churches, to other Anglican churches, other denominations or to no church, is worth further investigation in depth. Some work has been done on the delay in moving church after a house move<sup>12</sup>, but the processes involved in joining and leaving church attendance are complex, and larger scale interviewing would help

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<sup>12</sup> Brierley, *Changing Churches*, p.16-18 discusses this from a statistical approach. It is only to be regarded as a first approximation, since many of the figures are estimates and projections from a small base.



to uncover some of that complexity.<sup>13</sup> Some research has been done on those who leave churches<sup>14</sup>, but there is more to be done, especially in examining the details of the delay or failure to join a church after a house move.

#### 13.3.5 Reasons for staying

The people interviewed were not explicitly asked why they remained in attendance at the church: if the *British Weekly* material had been available at an earlier stage then some exploration of the term 'habit' would have been useful.

The reasons for continuing are implicit in the answers given, more clearly so in some cases than others. The initial reasons for joining remain important in continuing attendance, though a growing sense of belonging seemed to mean that it is possible to ride out times when those initial reasons are not being met as well as once was true.

For example, Tim spoke of the importance of home groups for Bible study and mutual support: "Though I haven't always been to home groups that has been important, and earlier on to have little jobs like sidesman." For him, Christian teaching was a high priority, but his comment also recognised the way in which a contribution to the running of the congregation also helped in the process of joining and belonging.

Viv began to attend church after an overwhelming sense of God's presence and care, and found it a strange place, but after 7 years of regular attendance felt very different: "I love this church. ...it has got a special place for me." She continued by referring to the people: "I have got attached to a lot of people for spiritual guidance and encouragement. When you have got people you can see Jesus in, I find that really encouraging"

For Viv the reason for joining was relatively little to do with existing relationships; although she went to the church where she knew one person, that was a new relationship of just a few weeks. However, her reasons for continuing to attend have much in common with those of

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<sup>13</sup> A similar plea was made in the *Church Times* leader, 7<sup>th</sup> February 1997, when commenting on the drop in Anglican attendance from 1994 to 1995.

people who had transferred into Christ Church: the relationships formed with other people were and are essential.

Belief is not unimportant: her final comment was: "If you can't see anything biblically wrong with what's going on in your church I don't see any reason to change."

It is the linking of belief, however expressed, and belonging, usually through relationships and specific tasks, that seemed to keep people attending church regularly. This linkage is illustrated by the very different experience of Jane: she has been part of five churches at different times, three of them Anglican. She said, "...in some churches you can feel ... as if you were amongst people that loved you, that would look after you and you could still be challenged". Belonging to a home group was also important to Jane for teaching and support.

Mollie R's remarks about staying were quoted in the previous section: her loyalty to other members of the congregation had kept her attending even when her beliefs about worship and the expression of faith were being questioned. However, it is not clear if she would have been able to keep that up indefinitely. Certainly it is worth noting how she ended her remarks: "So I stayed put, and kept me head down until it was all over." Her present belonging is made easier by her feeling that her beliefs are more in tune with the current ethos of the church.

Most of those interviewed spoke of the importance of their relationships with others in the church as factors in helping them join, even when they came to their nearest church or had had a powerful conversion experience. Implicitly or explicitly, all 12 interviewed referred to the importance of relationships with other people in maintaining their attendance. Though beliefs were not always explicitly discussed or questioned in the interviews, there were always implicit comments on belief and its continuing development.

It would seem that having the sense of shared belief with others in the congregation and with the minister is a crucial component in continued attendance: there is evidence from this congregation that where this sense of shared belief disappears then people will stop attending, either by joining another church or by not attending any church.

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<sup>14</sup> See, for example, Fanstone, *The Sheep that Got Away*

There is scope here for further investigation of how far shared belief can be attenuated before someone stops or switches their attendance.

### 13.3.6 Views about other people's reasons for joining or attending church

The final question in each interview was a very general one about their observations of other people and their reasons for joining church. The most frequently mentioned factor was personal contact of some kind: 7 of those interviewed drew attention to this. For example, Mark's first response was, "One factor is being felt spoken to and welcomed by the congregation". For Joy it was, "friendship, people that you know".

Though the recognition of this factor came from people who had themselves joined from different backgrounds, new to church and transferring from elsewhere, it was noticeable that the three people, Geoff, Cathy and Mollie V., who had moved house and been in an Anglican church did not suggest this reason. This was despite their own experience which included the welcome received and friendliness of the congregation. They tended to emphasize the nearness of the church and the worship being accessible. Geoff put it like this: "I think in some cases it is this question of being at a church which is convenient to get to. But then also I am sure the style of worship in that church has a great affect."

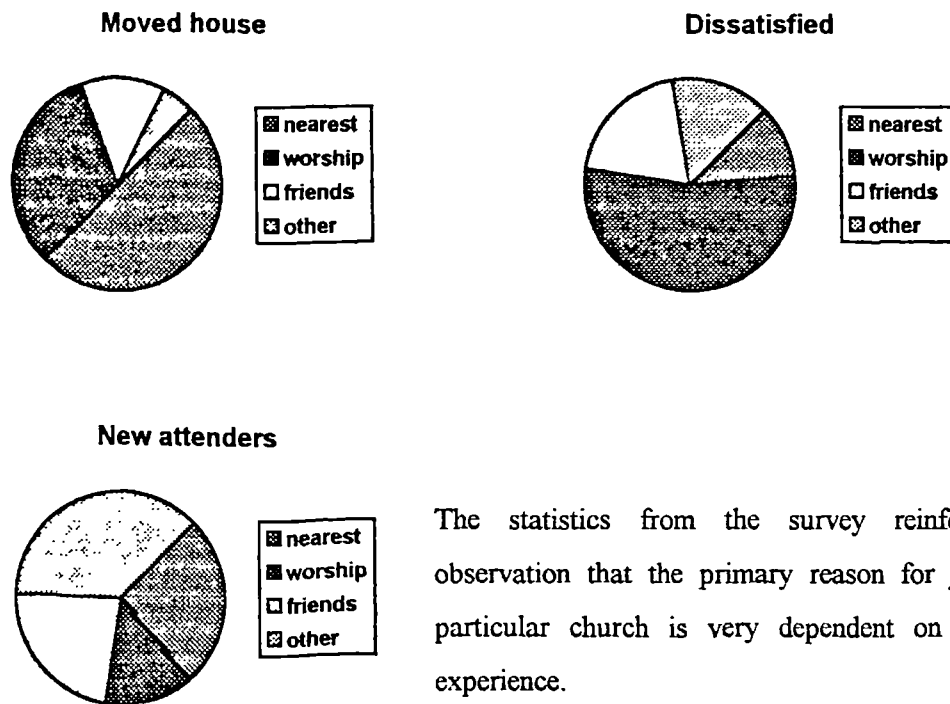
Only Tim referred to both friendliness and worship: he referred to the style of worship: "Some people are looking for an echo of the past. Some are looking for, for want of a better phrase, a Spring Harvest type of worship." He went on to speak about the importance of personal relationships for other people: "the group the size to know everyone is the right way to worship."

The numbers involved in the interviews were too few to make sweeping generalisations, but this difference in perception between Anglicans transferring and other people joining is substantiated in the larger survey undertaken for this thesis. In section 6.4.3, the reasons for joining the present congregation were compared with the reasons for leaving the previous one, or being a new attender.

It is worth noting the results<sup>15</sup> from three groups:

1. of those who had moved house (and were mainly Anglicans<sup>16</sup>), 50% looked for their nearest church, 32% had regard for the style of worship, and only 13% mentioned friends.
2. of those who had been dissatisfied with their previous church (and more likely not to be from an Anglican church<sup>17</sup>), only 11% looked for their nearest church, but 54% gave style of worship as a reason, and 20% mentioned friends
3. of those who were new to church attendance, 26% said it was their nearest church, just 14% referred to the worship style, but 23% mentioned friends.

These percentages are illustrated in the following pie charts. 'Other' is the summation of several reasons.



The statistics from the survey reinforce the observation that the primary reason for joining a particular church is very dependent on previous experience.

<sup>15</sup> Percentages in these three groups are taken from table 6.22, except where stated otherwise

<sup>16</sup> Table 6.23 indicates that 71% were from Anglican churches

<sup>17</sup> 43% were previously in an Anglican church; table 6.23 again

Those moving house were keen to worship at a nearby church, those dissatisfied were looking at the worship style, and those who were new to church attendance looked at their nearest church in conjunction with the personal contact. As the interviews have brought out, personal contact was also important for people in the first two groups especially in sustaining their attendance.

It would seem that in the main the interviewees were trying to generalise from their own experience, but, like the clergy in the Mass Observation survey<sup>18</sup>, found it hard to understand what motivated others. They frequently paused for longer before answering this question, and in some cases found themselves still answering in the first person. As Mollie V. said, "I think it's very complex". She clearly spoke for others who were puzzled.

It was noticeable in the Mass Observation findings that the habit of churchgoing in early life was a crucial factor in those who attended in later years. Yet only one interviewee commented on habit as a factor in church attendance. Brian gave as his first response: "I think some of the [people] are in church because they have always been in church, from Sunday school, ... perhaps they are on auto-pilot". He was not sure whether this pattern was a good one, citing his wife's comment: "Jane said the other day she has learnt so much in the seven years in church how much more could she have learnt if she had been there since childhood. So there are two edges to that."

One reason that habit was not picked out is perhaps that the question asked was about joining and leaving, not continued attendance, and this included the question to Brian. It leaves the same uncertainty as was found in discerning the interviewees' own motivations for continuing in church attendance: as stated at the beginning of section 13.3.5, people were not explicitly asked about such reasons.

In addition, there is likely to be a general perception, brought out in Brian's remarks, that 'habit' is not a good reason for church attendance. The emphasis placed on believing in evangelical churches will tend to make people wary of stating it as a reason for attending.

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<sup>18</sup> Section 12.2

The variation in perceptions of other people's motives in attending church highlights the usefulness of research in this area. Further work can be done on the connections between previous church experience, reasons for joining and reasons for continuing in attendance.

### 13.4 Conclusions from the interviews

The statistical survey reported in chapter 6 made clear the way in which many church attenders chose to go to their **nearest church**. The interviews have brought out that this is mostly true of those who had attended church elsewhere and moved into the area, though it is also a factor for people new to church attendance since they are likely to look round the area they know.

Those moving house do, however, take into account more than the nearness of the church; in particular they are also considering the ethos of worship and the kind of relationships they can make. These factors may help to explain what is missing for church attenders who do not find it easy to join another church after a house move.

The **style of worship** was the initial factor for only 2 people interviewed, according to their questionnaires, but 6 out of 7 moving church made a considerable point of the worship style in the discussion. (The statistical survey revealed the importance of worship style even more strongly.) It seemed that familiarity of form was important to those interviewed, as well as musical styles employed.

The style of worship was not directly important to those joining a church for the first time or after a long break. That does not mean that worship did not affect the overall sense of welcome and atmosphere, but the people interviewed coming in to church attendance in this way did not have the type of worship in mind.

The importance of **personal contact** in coming to faith or joining this particular church, or both was mentioned by all the interviewees. Two people had been taken to church by their parents, with their own commitment coming later. The warmth of welcome and opportunities to make relationships was frequently mentioned in the interviews. Finney's work emphasized

the importance of relationships for people finding faith.<sup>19</sup> These interviews extend that result to the importance of relationships in people finding a church, even when they have been committed to church attendance elsewhere.

For the adults coming new to church attendance, they described a sense of revelation and of intellectual questions being dealt with. People were part of the process, even where it had been a quick one; no-one in this sample talked of dreams or private mystical experiences as part of a conversion process independent of other people. At least 4 out of 12 spoke of conversion as a quick event in their lives, a proportion in line with Finney's result.

When it came to considering the **period of life** at which people had joined a church, 3 groups, not completely mutually exclusive, were identified:

1. adults (3 interviewees)
2. children without parents (5 interviewees)
3. children with parents (4 interviewees)

Group 1 had had a revelation of some kind, a making sense of life through faith. In these case histories believing came before belonging for 2 people, the third person was more the other way round.

Group 2 had their own sense of Christian commitment coming early on in their church attendance.

Group 3 initially went out of habit, but their own commitment had come at some point, in one case many years after childhood.

So everyone spoke about **belief** in some way, even though no specific question was asked about faith. In contrast very little was said about **habit**. The extent to which more detailed questioning about this point would have found that habit was important in sustaining church attendance is not clear.

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<sup>19</sup> Finney *op. cit.*, p.38-47

The analysis of the interviews raised the question 'are more people attending for first time as teens or adults than formerly the case?'. It was beyond the scope of this research to answer that question but is an important issue for churches concerned about future attendance rates.

It was unexpectedly found that the **graduates** selected had belonged to many more churches than non-graduates. The graduates interviewed still wanted to attend their local Anglican church if possible.

It was not easy to change **denomination**. It seemed that staying in a familiar denomination was quite important, partly because of worship styles and partly because of membership expectations. These are additional factors to the commitment and friendship usually felt to those attending the same congregation. Leaving for another local church felt like disloyalty to at least one interviewee.

The **continuance of church attendance** seemed to depend mostly on the initial reasons continuing, though relationships built up make it easier to stay. In particular belief continues to feature in maintaining church attendance. It is possible that the sense of shared belief is important.

Perceptions of why other people joined churches did not include much discussion of faith. The perceptions did vary to some extent depending on the previous experience of the interviewee: personal contact was recognised as important by those new to church attendance and by those dissatisfied with another church. The Anglicans who had moved house spoke about nearness and worship styles.

The final chapter of the thesis brings together the conclusions reached in each chapter, and also described areas of interest for possible further research.



## Conclusions and Possible Future Research

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### Some general conclusions

The conclusions brought together here come from the summaries and conclusions of the preceding chapters, along with some discussion of the findings. In the main the statistical results have been reached by studying Church of England congregations, but the conclusions about the reasons for movement between churches and in and out of church attendance have a wider denominational base.

1. **The need for caution about ministerial perceptions** was reinforced in this research: it has been noted before in regard to, for example, estimates of parish population figures. In this thesis it was found to be true of the description of spiritual journeys, with some differences between self-description and that of the church leaders.

The church leaders were more ready to describe a journey as restoration of faith or conversion, where self-descriptions were more likely to see continuity and so describe transferring from one church to another, even if there had been a gap in attendance.

2. **Caution is needed in the use of Church Growth Movement terms for types of growth.** The refinements suggested by Beasley-Murray on biological growth led him to describe no less than seven scenarios under that heading. The present thesis has found it useful to describe four types of transfer growth, helping to clarify some of the reasons which lie behind the phenomenon.

3. **The key conclusion with respect to the original purpose of the research is that the church plants studied have not grown disproportionately by overall transfer growth, but that they have tended to attract more people from other denominations, which makes the transfer growth more noticeable.**

Church planting is therefore vindicated as a means of increasing the overall church attendance in a given area. However, the church plants studied have not been shown to be significantly better at attracting new attenders than long established churches once the initial newness has gone, a period of perhaps no more than two years.

4. In order to relate the findings of this thesis to the debate on secularisation it is necessary to be more explicit about types of secularisation. The description made by

Shiner cited in Hamilton is of most use for this purpose. Shiner distinguished six, not mutually exclusive, meanings of the term secularisation:<sup>1</sup>

1. the decline of religion whereby previously accepted religious symbols and institutions lose prestige and influence
2. greater conformity with 'this world', away from supernatural concerns
3. disengagement of religion and society, with the privatisation of religion
4. transposition of religious beliefs into non-religious forms
5. the loss of supernatural explanations of the world and human life
6. movement from traditional to rational and utilitarian values

The people attending the churches studied and those in the 1949 *British Weekly* surveys had complex reasons for joining churches. Apart from the desire to worship locally, the main reason for choosing a popular church in the 1940's was the preaching, while in the 1990's it was the style of worship. In terms of Shiner's definitions of secularisation, the motivations expressed are opposite to the trends of definitions 1, 2, and probably 4.

Definition 3, the disengagement of religion and society, is not directly tested by the questions asked, but the manner in which most church plants begin, with significant community links and involvement, suggests that the movement as a whole does represent a de-secularising trend.

Since questions about beliefs were not asked in the questionnaires it is not possible to discuss definitions 5 and 6 statistically. The limited indication provided by the qualitative interviews was that new attenders gave more definitely supernatural explanations of the world than previously, and were certainly not being secularised in that sense by joining a church.

Like the work of Hornsby-Smith on English Roman Catholics,<sup>2</sup> this thesis has been largely concerned with the views of individuals. The evidence provided by those individuals attending churches shows that they continued to have religious reasons for joining and attending.

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<sup>1</sup> cited in Hamilton *op. cit.*, p.166

<sup>2</sup> M. Hornsby-Smith *Roman Catholic beliefs in England*, esp. pp.229-30

The existence of the church planting movement and its growth is in itself a sign of de-secularisation, since as a whole it takes the supernatural seriously and is also seeking to engage with the surrounding culture. The ability of the movement to reverse the trend of declining attendances is not shown unambiguously by this study, but it suggests that it has the potential to do so.

The conclusions that follow are mainly set out in the order that they occur in this thesis.

## Conclusions about finding a church, the amount of movement and the reasons given

### Summarised statistics on types of growth and losses

1. Stopping church attendance was not primarily about loss of faith, but mainly occurred through moving from one area to another or death (Section 2.1).
2. There is some evidence that faster growing churches do have higher conversion growth than the average. This was found in studies on the Southern Baptists (USA), Brethren and Assemblies of God (both UK). (Sections 2.6.3, 3.2.4) This means that faster growing churches are more effective at encouraging church attendance from those not previously attending, even if they have significant numbers of people joining by transfer.
3. In surveys in which ministers or other church leaders decided the categories of joiners and leavers, the following proportions were typically found. There will be wide variations between parishes, and for a given parish between one year and the next.

### **Proportions of types of growth:**

**transfer growth** was between 30%-50% of the growth per year; for Anglican churches, typically 7% of the growth was by transfer from another denomination

**conversion and restoration growth** were between 30% and 40% per year

**biological growth** was about 10% per year

the Anglican surveys found **other reasons** given frequently, in the case of Rochester as much as 20%, in St Albans it was 12%.

**Proportions of types of losses:**

In the case of the Anglicans **transfer loss** was between 50% and 55%, mostly because of a house move. The Baptist churches typically reported 30% - 35% transfer losses.

The proportion of loss through **Deaths** varied considerably between 20 and 40%.

The rate of **lapsing** in the Anglican surveys ranged between 8% to 16%.

When expressed as proportions of the total membership (the Electoral Roll) per year, the following figures were typical for the Anglican churches.

**Growth as a proportion of membership:**

The proportion of **people joining** was about 7%.

**Rates of transfer growth** between Anglican churches was likely to be in the range of 1-3%. Those **changing denomination** were between 0% and 1%.

**Conversion growth** was typically between 1% and 3%.

The **biological growth** was typically ½-1%, about half the birth rate.

**Losses as a proportion of membership:**

Typically about 5% left the Electoral Roll each year.

**Transfer loss** through moving house was mainly in the range 1½% to 3%; through a **local church move** it was between 0% and 1%.

The **death rate** was higher than the national average (about 1.1%) at 1½-2%, (and slightly higher in the case of the Baptist churches surveyed).

The number **lapsing** was hard to assess but will usually be less than 1%.

**Reasons for finding or moving church**

1. People chose new churches most commonly because it was the nearest or by its style of worship, with a slight tendency for women to emphasize 'nearest' and men the 'style of worship' (Q.6). Otherwise there were no significant gender differences in the replies of the church attenders in this survey.
2. Relatively few people put a high priority on the provision for children (Q.6)

3. Just over six out of ten said they had attended another church immediately before their present church, a figure higher than previous surveys of church leaders had found. (Q.7)
4. Many people had changed denomination, 177 or 19% of the total number surveyed, 35% of those transferring church (Q.9). This was especially marked in the period 1-10 years previously (Q.5, 8 and 9, table 6.27) and showed far greater denominational fluidity than the results in the other Anglican surveys.
5. The overall proportion of transfer growth had not changed significantly over time, but in more recent years there was a marked increase in transfers because of dissatisfaction with a previous church (Q.5 and 8).
6. The overall increase in dissatisfaction occurred because of changes in Anglican reasons for leaving a previous church (Q.5, 8 and 9, table 6.27).
7. The proportion choosing the nearest church had declined more recently, while more people were joining because of the style of worship and because of friendships (Q.5 and 6), supporting Finney's description of a more choosy clientele.
8. This pattern of change in the reasons for choice of a new church was true even for those moving house, though not as pronounced as in the survey as a whole (Q.5, 6 and 8); they still tended to be looking for the nearest church.
9. Those dissatisfied with their previous church were especially interested in worship and preaching (Q.6 and 8).
10. New church attenders found nearness and friendships more important (Q.6 and 8).

Comparison with the results of the Mass-Observation study of 1949 showed that many reasons for finding a church had remained the same over the latter half of the 20<sup>th</sup> century. The following were the key points, also noting results which have changed (chapter 12):

Comparison with the results of the Mass-Observation study of 1949 showed that many reasons for finding a church had remained the same over the latter half of the 20<sup>th</sup> century. The following were the key points, also noting results which have changed (chapter 12):

1. The reasons given for attending church and for the popularity of certain churches are largely the same in the earlier research and in that of the 1990's.
2. The importance of atmosphere and use of laity has been demonstrated repeatedly
3. Adult churchgoers nearly always had a positive childhood experience of church
4. Denominational fluidity has long been a feature of English church life
5. Personal contact is important to most people in attending a church, especially in churches drawing from a wider area
6. Gender ratios in denominations seem to have altered, with the Roman Catholic church now having the most even number of men and women, where previously it had been most imbalanced, while the Church of England had moved in the opposite direction.
7. Attending church twice on a Sunday has dropped dramatically, especially in Free Churches

These reasons were explored further in the interviews (chapter 13):

1. People choosing to go to their **nearest church** were mostly those who had attended church elsewhere and moved into the area, or people new to church attendance since they are likely to look round the area they know.

Those moving house did, however, take into account more than the nearness of the church; in particular, they were also considering the ethos of worship and the kind of relationships they could make. These factors may help to explain what is missing for church attenders who do not find it easy to join another church after a house move.

2. The **style of worship** was the initial factor for only 2 people interviewed, according to their questionnaires, yet 6 out of 7 moving church made a considerable point of the worship style in the discussion. It seemed that familiarity of form was important to those interviewed, as well as musical styles employed.

4. The importance of **personal contact** in coming to faith or joining this particular church, or both was mentioned by all the interviewees. The warmth of welcome and opportunities to make relationships was frequently mentioned in the interviews. Relationships are important for people finding faith and for people finding a church, even when they have been committed to church attendance elsewhere.
5. For the **adults coming new to church attendance**, they described a sense of revelation and of intellectual questions being dealt with. At least 4 out of 12 spoke of conversion as a quick event in their lives.
6. Whatever **period of life** people had joined a church, they all described a time of personal commitment to faith and to church attendance. Everyone spoke about **belief** in some way, but very little about **habit**.
7. It was unexpectedly found that the **graduates** selected had belonged to many more churches than non-graduates. The graduates interviewed still wanted to attend their local Anglican church if possible.
8. It was not easy to change **denomination**. It seemed that staying in a familiar denomination was quite important, partly because of worship styles and partly because of membership expectations, as well as the commitment and friendship involved.
9. The **continuance of church attendance** seemed to depend mostly on the initial reasons continuing, though relationships built up make it easier to stay. In particular, belief continued to feature in maintaining church attendance.
10. Perceptions of why other people joined churches did not include much discussion of faith. The perceptions did vary to some extent depending on the previous experience of the interviewee: personal contact was recognised as important by those new to church attendance and by those dissatisfied with another church. The Anglicans who had moved house spoke about nearness and worship styles.

Conclusions about growth through church planting and the types of transfer growth



1. Studies in the Southern Baptists suggested there was a window of opportunity for new churches growing, lasting perhaps 10-15 years. (Section 1.2.2) The case studies of Anglican church plants in England also seemed to suggest a window of opportunity, but that seemed to last a much shorter time, perhaps the first 2 years. (Chapters 4 and 11)
2. The AOG and Pioneer churches, encouraging evangelism and not least church planting, had not grown disproportionately by transfer growth, when compared with longer established congregations. (Chapter 3)
3. The individual Anglican church plants had a mixed record on transfer growth, but in combination with the planting congregations had shown significant growth through new attenders. (Chapters 4, 8, 9, 10)
4. The fairly rapid plateauing of growth and the similarity of types of growth (except the degree of denominational transfer) suggest that continued growth would be better achieved by further well-planned church plants.
5. The Wakefield survey checked reasons people gave for being involved with church planting teams: they mainly looked for a local church, and they were not dissatisfied with their previous church. (Chapter 6)
6. The value of churches in local neighbourhoods is borne out by the Wakefield survey.
7. However, transfer growth levels and types were similar across a parish, so a church plant tended to take on the features of its planting congregation. There was also evidence of high levels of inter-denominational transfer growth in early stages of church plant life, which in some cases was the result of other churches closing and in other cases was dissatisfaction. (Chapter 11)

### Further Research Ideas

As the work proceeded a variety of further areas for research came to mind. They are listed here together with a note of the section they arose from, in order to provide more

detail on the reasons for the possible interest. In some cases these ideas are about refining and checking conclusions given in the other sections of this Conclusions chapter.

1. How many church plants lead to growing congregations and for how long? (Section 1.2)
2. Are levels of church-going higher where there is more church planting activity? (Section 1.4)
3. The 'timing delay' between leaving and joining another congregation: more investigation of the length of time and the reasons is needed. (Section 2.1)
4. Do most faster growing churches have higher conversion growth than the average? (Sections 2.6.3 and 3.2.4)
5. Is transfer growth is usually less than transfer loss? (Section 2.6.4)
6. It is possible that church members are less likely to move than the general population, even when allowance is made for the age structure of church congregations: has this been researched already? (Section 2.6.4)
7. Examination of attendance figures could be extended to examine the effectiveness of different churches in different types of locations (for example, using the Chelmsford criteria for type of parish). (Chapter 5)
8. The survey could be extended to parishes with other theological positions.
9. Is there any difference between those transferring churches and adult 'converts' or 'restored' in their long-term church attendance patterns? (Section 6.3)
10. Are more people than formerly transferring because of dissatisfaction, especially where there is a change of denomination? (Section 6.4.4)
11. Are weekly attenders more balanced between men and women than less frequent attenders? (Section 12.2.2)

12. Has denominational fluidity changed significantly over time? (Section 12.3)
13. Is an increasing proportion of people attending for the first time now? (Section 13.3.2)
14. Are patterns of joining and attending churches different for graduates and non-graduates? (Section 13.3.3)
15. The complex of reasons for leaving, taking account of destination, to another church, another denomination or no church is not very fully known. (Section 13.3.4)
16. How far can shared belief can be attenuated before someone stops attending or switches their attendance? (Section 13.3.5)
17. Further work can be done on the connections between previous church experience, reasons for joining and reasons for continuing in attendance. (Section 13.3.6)

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Appendix AChurch Growth Survey

Date questionnaire filled in: .....

This questionnaire is part of a project on church planting and the growth of congregations. If you could take a few minutes to fill in this sheet and hand it in before you leave it would be a great help. Even if you are a visitor today please hand this in, every reply is important in gaining the full picture. Thank you very much for your help. Please tick all the boxes which apply to you. Gavin Wakefield

1. Male ☐ Female ☐

2. Your Age group

0-15 ☐ 16-30 ☐ 31-45 ☐ 46-60 ☐ 61-75 ☐ 75+ ☐

3. Your paid occupation (if not in paid employment please put down your last paid job or that of the wage-earner in your household) .....

4. How long have you been a Christian?

Brought up as a Christian ☐ 0-1year ☐ 1-5 yrs ☐ 6-10yrs ☐ 11-20yrs ☐  
20yrs+ ☐ Not a Christian ☐

5. How long have you been attending this congregation?

0-1year ☐ 1-5 yrs ☐ 6-10yrs ☐ 11-20yrs ☐ 20yrs+ ☐ Visitor ☐

6. Why did you decide to attend this church?

Nearest church to home ☐ Friends attended ☐ Style of worship ☐ Preaching ☐  
Provision for children ☐ Converted here ☐ Other (please specify).....

7. Did you attend another church immediately before this one?

Yes ☐ No ☐ If "No" please go to Question 11

8. Why did you leave your previous church?

Dissatisfied with it ☐ Moved house ☐

Other (please specify).....

9. What denomination was your previous church?

Church of England ☐ Roman Catholic ☐ Methodist ☐ Baptist ☐URC ☐ Free Evangelical ☐ "House church" ☐

Other (please specify).....

10. How frequently did you attend that church?

Weekly ☐ Fortnightly ☐ Monthly ☐ Less than 12 times a year ☐

11. How frequently do you attend this church?

Weekly ☐ Fortnightly ☐ Monthly ☐ Less than 12 times a year ☐

Appendix B**Church Planting Survey**

Date questionnaire filled in: .....

This questionnaire is part of a project on church planting and the growth of new congregations. If you could take a few minutes to fill in this sheet and hand it in before you leave it would be a great help. Even if you are a visitor today please hand this in, every reply is important in gaining the full picture. Thank you very much for your help. Please tick all the boxes which apply to you. Gavin Wakefield

1. Male ☐ Female ☐2. **Your Age group**0-15 ☐ 16-30 ☐ 31-45 ☐ 46-60 ☐ 61-75 ☐ 75+ ☐3. **Your paid occupation** (if not in paid employment please put down your last paid job or that of the wage-earner in your household) .....4. **How long have you been a Christian?**Brought up as a Christian ☐ 0-1year ☐ 1-5 yrs ☐ 6-10yrs ☐ 11-20yrs ☐  
20yrs+ ☐ Not a Christian ☐5. **How long have you been attending this congregation?**One of the planting group ☐ 0-1year ☐ 1-5 yrs ☐ 6-10yrs ☐ 11-20yrs ☐  
20yrs+ ☐ Visitor ☐6. **Why did you decide to attend this church?**Nearest church to home ☐ Friends attended ☐ Style of worship ☐ Preaching ☐  
Provision for children ☐ Converted here ☐ Other (please specify).....7. **Did you attend another church immediately before this one?**Yes ☐ No ☐ If "No" please go to Question 118. **Why did you leave your previous church?**Dissatisfied with it ☐ Wanted to be involved in church planting ☐  
Moved house ☐ Other (please specify).....9. **What denomination was your previous church?**Church of England ☐ Roman Catholic ☐ Methodist ☐ Baptist ☐  
URC ☐ Free Evangelical ☐ "House church" ☐  
Other (please specify).....10. **How frequently did you attend that church?**Weekly ☐ Fortnightly ☐ Monthly ☐ Less than 12 times a year ☐11. **How frequently do you attend this church?**Weekly ☐ Fortnightly ☐ Monthly ☐ Less than 12 times a year ☐

Appendix C**Christ Church Worship Survey**

Date questionnaire filled in: .....

The Worship group has been discussing the way we can best help all the congregation to grow in worshipping God. Our discussions have focused on the morning communion because it is currently the main service. We have found it hard to reach firm conclusions because we know of the wide variety of expectations and desires in worship. With the agreement of our church council we are sending out this questionnaire to obtain a more accurate picture. As well as questions on worship we ask some about your background to help us see if there are any patterns to the answers.

The questionnaire can be answered anonymously if you wish and in any case will be treated confidentially. Please return completed questionnaires as you leave or to the church office in an envelope marked "Worship" by 31st March 1993. Please tick all the boxes which apply to you.

The Worship group.

**Background Questions**1. Male ☐ Female ☐2. **Your Age group**0-15 ☐ 16-30 ☐ 31-45 ☐ 46-60 ☐ 61-75 ☐ 75+ ☐3. **Do you have children in any of the following age-groups?**0-4 ☐ 5-7 ☐ 8-11 ☐ 12-15 ☐ 16-18 ☐4. **How long have you been a Christian?**Brought up as a Christian ☐ 0-1year ☐ 1-5 yrs ☐ 6-10yrs ☐ 11-20yrs ☐  
20yrs+ ☐ Not a Christian ☐**Questions about Worship**5. **Which services do you attend?**8am HC ☐ 10am HC ☐ 10am Family Service ☐ 6.30pm Services ☐  
(HC=Holy Communion)6. **What reasons do you have for not attending particular services?**domestic situation ☐ age of children ☐ style of service ☐ timing ☐  
one service is enough ☐ other.....

7. If you attend evening services please rank them in order of their ability to help you worship God. Use '1' for the most helpful, '2' for the next, and so on.

Listening to God ☐ Youth/Special Focus ☐ HC ☐ Open worship ☐

The following questions are in the form of statements which people sometimes make. Please tick the box which indicates **your** feelings about each statement.

	agree strongly	agree	no strong view	disagree	disagree strongly
8. Before the service proper we should... (a) be quiet -----or (b) join in the worship songs					
9. I worship God best in a service which follows a set order(liturgy) with little or no deviation.					
10. Services should usually have contributions from all ages.					
11. Our HC service is very good in enabling me to worship God.					
12. It is important for me to receive Communion each week.					
13. Using visual aids, drama, dance etc. is a great help to worship and is to be encouraged.					
14. The usual 10amHC service should be regarded as an adult attended service.					
15. Sermons are currently too long					
16(a). The present mix of modern and traditional hymns is good.					

(b) It would be better if we had...	..many more traditional songs and hymns	..a few more traditional songs and hymns	..a few more modern songs and hymns	..many more modern songs and hymns

**Looking to the future**, it is possible that we might need to have two morning services. One reason is to cater for the variety of preferences in worship; the second reason, is to give space for new people to join in worship and take responsibility in the church. The following questions are intended to find out the strength of support for such a move and the form it might take.

	agree strongly	agree	feel neutral	disagree	disagree strongly
17. I believe it is a good idea to plan for 2 morning congregations with different emphases in style.					

**18. If we develop 2 morning congregations with different emphases which would you be most likely to attend?**

more traditional ☐      less traditional ☐      don't know ☐

### General Questions about attendance

**19. How long have you been attending this church?**

0-1year ☐    1-5 yrs ☐    6-10yrs ☐    10yrs+ ☐    Visitor ☐

**20. Why did you decide to attend this church?**

Nearest church to home ☐    Friends attended ☐    Style of worship ☐    Preaching ☐  
Provision for children ☐    Converted here ☐    Other (please specify).....

**21. Did you attend another church immediately before this one?**

Yes ☐    No ☐    If "No" please go to Question 25



**22. Why did you leave your previous church?**

Dissatisfied with it ☐    Moved house ☐  
Other (please specify).....

**23. What denomination was your previous church?**

Church of England ☐    Roman Catholic ☐    Methodist ☐    Baptist ☐  
URC ☐    Free Evangelical ☐    "House church" ☐  
Other (please specify).....

**24. How frequently did you attend that church?**

Weekly ☐    Fortnightly ☐    Monthly ☐    Less than 12 times a year ☐

**25. How frequently do you attend this church?**

Weekly ☐    Fortnightly ☐    Monthly ☐    Less than 12 times a year ☐

Visitor ☐ (you may want to tick one of the other boxes in this question as well)

**Please turn over**

**Other comments** Please add any other comments about our worship if you wish

**Optional Name**.....

Address.....

Thank you for taking the time to complete this questionnaire.